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BY

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In manners as in shape; thy blood and virtue
Contend for empire in thee; and thy goodness
Share with thy birth-right. Love all; trust a few;
Do wrong to none; be able for thy enemy
Rather in power than use; and keep thy friend
Under thy life's key; be checked for silence;
But never tax'd for speech."

VOL I.

London:
T. CAUTLEY NEWBY, PUBLISHER,
30, WELBECK STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE,
1865.

[THE RIGHT OF TRANSLATION IS RESERVED.]

250. u. 198.


BIBLIOTHECA·BODLEIANA·

THE ANGLE HOUSE.

CHAPTER I.

OXFORD, OR CAMBRIDGE, OR HACKNEY.

"HARRY, my boy, if you prove as truthful and good a man as your father, I shall never have cause to own you for my son, with a blush on my cheek or a sorrow in my heart. It was your father's conviction and it is mine also, that virtue consists in actions—not opinions. My father was a clergyman, though but a humble curate, and your two

sisters have married clergymen, as you know, and you are fully aware that Sir Langton Elliott has signified his willingness to assist you if you can decide to go to Cambridge or Oxford."

As my mother said this, she looked at me for an instant, then continued her plain sewing; for her hands were always engaged in some useful employment. I use that word in contra-distinction to work of a fanciful and fashionable kind, of which we have more than enough at the present time. Her look had that peculiar sweetness which is felt by all as the essence of motherly love, yet I felt also that she inquired if I had made up my mind. Perhaps there was a little touch of anxiety expressed about her tender lips, though it is quite likely that my own emotions were strongly of that kind, so that I read in her face what I felt in my own spirit. As I remained silent for a few seconds she added—

"I leave the matter entirely with you, and

if you follow the honest convictions of your mind, after calm deliberation, I am sure you will do that which your own conscience will approve hereafter. Sir Langton will assist you to go either to Cambridge or Oxford."

I was standing against the bay window as she spoke, with my back towards the setting sun, which cast a flood of golden light through the open sash, across my mother's head and shoulders, while the rest of her person was partly lost in shade, and as she looked at me again with a calm and benignant smile illuminated with the sun's radiance, there was an expression of ineffable loveliness and beauty before me which moved me to tears. I continued to look at her without speaking, for I was overpowered by my own emotions. My mother did not move her needle, which was half through the stuff she was sewing, and still held by her fingers, but after some half minute or more she said—

"Harry, how wonderfully like you are to

your father, the very quivering of your lips painfully resemble his. I wish for your sake that you were less sensitive. What are you thinking about so earnestly? It is not necessary for you to decide to-day, nor this week even."

"I need not decide yet," I replied, "but still I wish to be delivered from the uneasy state of my mind as speedily as possible. I know well the advantage of studying at one of the Universities. I also know something of what I shall have to pass through there with the two attendants, which will never leave me for a moment."

"What attendants are they, Harry?" asked my mother, but not without some perception of my answer before I gave it. I said, "My sensibility and my poverty."

"There again you view things exactly in the light of your father's intelligence. You are far too sensitive for a man who has to face this world with—" She paused, and I added, "Poverty for a companion."

"Mother! should you have loved and revered my father any more than you do if he had been a clergyman instead of an Independent minister?"

"Not an atom, my son, if I know anything of my own heart. Perhaps I loved him all the more because my father, as a clergyman, was a little prejudiced against him. Depend upon this, Harry Neville, your mother's love will not be regulated by your deciding for Cambridge, or Oxford, or Hackney; but by that which is within her heart united to your actions—to your truthful discharge of your duty—to your virtue—not by forms of faith, creeds, and opinions. But here comes your sister's husband, so let us drop this subject, for though he discharges the duties of his office, as Vicar of Timberton, with general satisfaction, his prejudice against dissenters does not, I fear, much improve the piety of his spirit. Did you expect him up here this evening?"

I said—"Yes, mother, I saw him this morning, and he told me that Sir Langton and his lady were going next Monday to the south of France for the benefit of her health, and most likely would remain there for a year or more. For this reason he informed me that Sir Langton was desirous to know before he left England what steps I intended to take."

A minute after, my brother-in-law, the Rev. William Rushworth, Vicar of Timberton, came into the sitting room. At first sight his appearance was that of a somewhat handsome man, with dark eyes and black crisp hair; but, upon closer inspection, an intelligent observer could not fail noticing that his nose was much too sharp and thin to be beautiful, and his whiskers too scrubby and in detached bunches, while his mouth was too long and his lips too sensuous—not wholly without sensibility and a bitter smile combined. He was above the middle size and his voice was sharp and ringing, much more

fitted to be a captain of a troop of dragoons than a father in Israel, or a shepherd to the lambs of the Galilean.

"Well, Mrs. Neville, how are you this evening? Mary says she thought you would have made the things for the children before this time; she wonders how it is that they are not finished, but she supposes that you have been messing over some old woman's cap or bonnet, which really is of but little or no consequence at all, and have neglected your own daughter's comfort or the comfort of her children, which is just the same thing."

My mother was a wise woman, as well as a good one—neither swift to speak nor hasty in taking offence—and very slow to wrath. She looked him calmly in the face, her eyes quite as bright with intelligence as her son-in-law's, and immeasureably fuller of Christian charity, and gently replied, "Tell Mary that her mother says that if she would reflect a little more and wonder less she would understand the affairs of life better, and talk more

wisely. I was much hindered all day yesterday, going in and out to do trifling things for the comfort of my old servant, who has seven small children, and is dying of consumption. Besides this, I sat up with her last night, for we expected she would not live from one hour to another, but she revived this morning a little. I have not been much in the mood for sewing."

I was reading a book, lounging with my back towards them, and did not turn or speak; but as soon as my mother had given the information I turned round, as he said—

"Oh, indeed, that alters the case a little. I suppose she feels like most of the ranters, that she is going to glory. You see, Harry, my lad, ignorance and impudence generally go together in sectarian notions as in civil society; the radical defect of dissent next to the fact itself is that the ranting preacher, or the dissenting minister, descends to the grovelling level of the vulgar mind. I know your mother thinks otherwise, and in proof of her

opinion, refers to the character of your father. I will not deny the fact that he was above the average; but it is for that reason that I cannot take him as a fair sample. He would have been a much greater man, if he had been in holy orders."

"He could not have been a better man," said my mother. "Neither do I see how he could have been a greater; I am sure he could not have been more studious."

"Position—position in society," said the Vicar, "in a state of society in which the grand element of subordination of rank is the leading law of Providence—Divine Providence I may say, gives greatness to talents when in holy orders, which cannot be realized amongst the dissenters. You will soon understand this when you get to Oxford or Cambridge."

My mother went on sewing, stitch after stitch, apparently without heeding what her son-in-law said, yet not a word escaped her ear. I said—

"Mr. Rushworth, your views of men and

things very materially differ from mine, for—"

"Without doubt," he added, with a short, sharp laugh; "but would it not have been as well—quite as modest and more respectful, for you, a youth of twenty, not to set up your views so pointedly in opposition to mine—the Vicar of Timberton, who has been twenty years in holy orders? Harry, my lad, this cavilling of yours is one of the things you have to correct—which will get corrected at College, and I presume you will soon be there, for Sir Langton told me last evening that he was willing to provide you the means of your graduating at one of the Universities. He inclines to Cambridge, but I recommend you to choose Oxford. Here he comes across the Green, he said he would meet me here this evening, mind you stick up for Oxford, the expense will perhaps be little more, but he can well afford it with all his rent roll, and neither chick nor child, and the next heir an old sea captain, with no more taste and re-

finement than a codfish. Stick up for Oxford, Harry, my lad, and it will be smooth as his own bald cranium."

My mother looked into my face with eyes so tender, so loving, and intelligent, yet at the same time with such disapprobation of the words and manner of the Vicar, that I seemed to gather all she wished to say without her speaking. Sir Langton Elliott was passing by the window, my mother's look told me her desire, so to relieve her anxiety I said hastily, "Mother, I shall sincerely thank him, but take three days to decide the point."

"You will be a fool to take three hours," sharply muttered the Rev. William Rushworth.

The servant opened the door and the Baronet entered, bowed, and advanced to shake hands with my mother. He then gave me his hand also, the Vicar had left him at the Mansion a short time before. Sir Langton was a tall thin man with a placid face, gentle grey eyes, and soft lips, and a smooth bald

head, the sides of which were rather thickly covered with hair, considering the absence thereof on the front and crown. He took his seat opposite to my mother, and as soon as the common inquiries had passed, he at once proceeded to the business which had brought him to the Angle-house, the name by which the place was called in which my mother lived, and I was born. Sir Langton Elliott said, in his usual gentle and deliberate way, but without anything like a *hiatus* between his words—

"I learn from your son-in-law that your son Harry, here, has a desire to enter into holy orders at some future day, indeed that he is very anxious to enter upon that honourable, useful, and, I may say, noble career of life, a course which I am sure must give great satisfaction to you, Mrs. Neville. If I had a son I should be excessively rejoiced to see him walking in that honourable course."

"I shall be glad to see Harry happy and useful in life, and following a course which at

once gives present satisfaction and future hope," said my mother, "and I trust that in whatever position of life he may be placed, and whatever profession or calling he may choose, that he will always act in a manner that will secure self-respect."

"I have no doubt he will do so, Mrs. Neville," said the Baronet, "but I understood that he had decided to enter the Church."

The calm eyes of my mother passed over my face as they moved to look at the Vicar, who said with surprising softness for so sharp a voice—

"Yes, yes, Sir Langton Elliott; you see, Mrs. Neville, like a prudent woman, is careful how she builds up hopes either for herself or her son. It is foolish work, as you often say, most wisely, Sir Langton, to flatter ourselves with vain fancies in the affairs of life. Having myself carefully studied the disposition, and, I may say, capabilities of Harry, I am sure that his inclinations will lead him to select a path so honourable in itself, to say

nothing about the distinction conferred at the very starting, by Sir Langton Elliott's patronage. His mother, like myself, and I may say, Harry also, feels the difficulties incident to the necessary outlay of funds, to secure his matriculation and taking degrees. This difficulty is now obviated by your generosity and disinterested high-mindedness, and love of divine things."

My mother did not take her eyes off the lips of her daughter's husband while he was speaking, the whole of which time he looked first at me, then at the Baronet. I once or twice looked out of the window wondering what my mother would say to such an unexpected display of the Vicar. When he paused she said—

"William Rushworth, I am not, I think, at all given to flatter myself with vain fancies in the affairs of life; and I beg, Sir Langton, you will very distinctly understand me, that I have no personal desire for my son Harry to enter the Church; on the other hand, if he

is bent in mind that way, I am, as an affectionate mother acting towards a dutiful son, ready to make every possible self-sacrifice to help him to attain the end desired. I am sure, you, sir, will believe me sincere, when I say that I have the highest esteem for you, and the most grateful sense of your past kindness in presenting my daughter's husband with the Vicarage of Timberton."

"I beg you will not mention it, Mrs. Neville, for believe me, I still hold myself the obliged party, for your late husband's services to me and Lady Elliott in Arabia. If I can render any service in this affair of your son's, I shall do so with feelings of unmixed pleasure. I have informed Mr. Rushworth, and I may do so now, once for all, it will give me much satisfaction to supply the necessary means for him to enter into holy orders. I would prefer, as a matter of feeling, perhaps, that Cambridge should be chosen in preference to Oxford; but I shall leave that to his own choice. What feeling, or

opinion, have you about the matter, Master Harry? You will excuse me addressing you as a boy, for it seems but the other day when Mr. Harry Neville, your lamented father, and mother, were nursing me and Lady Elliott at Damascus. You were then unborn."

I saw the forefinger of my mother's left hand suddenly quiver, and I understood its significance; meanwhile, the Vicar had moved a step forward from the mantelpiece on which he had been leaning, and then a step back again, while his large eyes clearly showed that he had just then discovered an important fact. He did not know that the Independent preacher who died before he knew any of the Nevilles, had rendered Sir Langton Elliott and his lady any important service; and still less that the gift of the Vicarage of Timberton to the said William Rushworth, was not because of any particular merit in himself, but because he was the husband of the daughter of that man, of whom he was in the habit of speaking with considerable contempt.

Being asked the question, I replied—

"Indeed, Sir Langton, I have no kind of predeliction respecting the Universities—one seems to me as good as the other—and when I have fully made up my mind, your feeling would decide my choice."

The Baronet looked a little surprised when my mother began saying—"The fact is"—just as the Vicar began—"You see, Sir Langton"—at which Sir Langton lifted his forefinger towards him, meanwhile looking at my mother, distinctly saying by the action, let me know what Mrs. Neville wishes to speak. My mother continued, "Harry, in fact, has not yet made up his mind what course to enter upon as his future calling. His father's is before him as an example of a good and wise man, and perhaps the nature of his early impressions, the character of his reading, which has been rather large for so young a man, altogether creates in his mind a balancing force against entering the Church. As far as I can understand his state of mind, it is

not whether it shall be Cambridge or Oxford, but Cambridge or Hackney, where his father was Senior Wrangler."

"That's it, Sir Langton, in some degree," said the Vicar, "for, united to that feeling, there is a degree of spiritual pride, which more or less clings to dissent in spite of better judgment. Resistance to authority in matters of faith is a crying evil of these times—which is fast invading not only the civil relations of life, but the domestic likewise—for this reason it has been my duty as Vicar of the parish, to press home the obligation of the juvenile members of every family, to obey the will and authority of those above them in years and position. Years and position, Sir Langton—but here comes the Captain, who, I am sure, will support my opinion that, it is the duty of young men to be obedient to authority—good morning, Captain Leo."

"Evening, you should say, Vicar, for it's 6.25 p.m. To be sure I shall support obedience to authority, ah, brother—what! a

council of war on—how do, Mrs. Neville? Is it a peace conference? What is the point at issue? Well, Harry, my boy, how cloudy you look, ah, ah, ah; I see how it stands, here's the Vicar wants to enlist you into the service of the Church dragoons—called 'black dragoons' by one of themselves—while my brother, Sir Langton, wants you to go into the Army, and is, I presume, ready to purchase you a commission, while your amiable mother, mother-like, wants to keep 'her only son,' yourself, 'at home,' ah ah, a bit of Norval, not intended though; now I advise you to follow my example, not in my naughtiness, Mrs. Neville, but in taking to saltwater and singing 'Rule Britannia, Britannia rules the waves.'" The old Sea Captain, with a heavy bass voice, roared out the national song, which for the most part to most Englishmen, has but one other line as, "Britons, never, never, never shall be slaves."

"What a noisy fellow you are, Captain Leo," said the Baronet, "you fancy you are

in the Bay of Biscay, but you are in the private house of a lady."

"I beg Mrs. Neville's pardon from my very soul, and I feel sure that she will forgive me this time."

"I do forgive you, Captain, and hope you will not sing so boisterously again, for you see you have frightened both my canary birds."

"Poor little dears, so I have, but you see they don't know me so well as you do, Mrs. Neville, you are not frightened at my noise—ay?"

"Not in the least," said my mother, serenely, "I only dislike it, because it is noise, not music. I dare say I should feel a pleasure in hearing your voice commanding seamen in a storm."

"Or in a devilish good sea fight, ah—ah—at'em again, blaze away lads, huzza—huzza—board her, boys—board her—glory! duty! victory! That's the mettle of true Jack Tars, true Englishmen, that enables such sweet

ladies as you and these gentlemen before you to 'live at home at ease.'"

"Harry, my boy, don't you let the Vicar persuade you to be a 'black dragoon,' it's a regular tying a fellow to his mother's apron strings."

Sir Langton rather hastily rose up, laughing at his brother's rough and out-spoken words and manners, and taking my mother by the hand he led her to the hall door, wishing me and the Vicar good evening, and they walked slowly across the garden in front of the Angle-house. When they were gone out, the Vicar said, in his smoothest cadence, "I certainly envy you that rich and exhilarating flow of spirits, Captain Leo, which you always seem to possess as a natural condition. If that is a legitimate result of a sea-faring life, I wish I were a jolly Jack Tar. It may be all very well when a man has youth, and health, and money, and—"

The Vicar paused and pulled up his white neck-tie a little as he looked at himself in the

mirror, at the same time lowering his voice to a kind of whining tone.

"And what else, your Reverence? out with it like a jolly tar," said the Captain.

"And not troubled with a conscience," added the Vicar.

"Why damn it, Vicar, you don't mean that? What do you say to that, Harry Neville, for the men who fight the battles of King George, and the nation on the dark rolling billows of the stormy seas? Harry, my boy, keep out of the way of men who are never troubled with a conscience?"

"It is my intention to do so as far as I am able," I remarked, "for which reason I incline to eschew those academical groves where the logic and theology of a man is taught, who unblushingly said, he 'never could afford to have a conscience.'"

"Bravo, bravo, you are dead beaten, Vicar. The Church has lost a recruit if Britannia has not gained a tar."

"You misunderstand me, Captain Leo; I

did not mean not troubled with a conscience that way; I did not mean anything personal, upon my honour — oh, no, nothing personal."

"Oh, no, all right; to be sure you did not. Churchmen of your order never do mean anything when they talk about being 'troubled with a conscience that way.'" The old sea captain chuckled inwardly, while a hundred little wrinkles and puckers almost closed up his keen grey eyes which shone like sparks of fire from under his bushy eyebrows. His eyes were all glee—keen, intellectual glee—and a superficial observer would not, perhaps, have easily discovered any other expression in his face beyond riotous fun; but it was not exactly in that way that my mother observed faces, and as she returned to the room, that moment she failed not to read contempt written on the Captain's lips. In her quiet way she remarked to him—

"Captain Leo, when my children were helpless, and had to be watched continually

to guard them from fire and water and edged tools, I used to think, like most mothers, that when they were able to attend to themselves, that all my anxiety would cease. Now I find it is not so. They have wills of their own, and quite right they should, but though I have no particular cause to find fault, either with my daughters or my son—"

"Very true; I make no doubt of that, Mrs. Neville. The best thing you can do with Harry will be to send him to sea—with a mother's blessing—if he thinks he would like the service; it will be better than making him a chimney-sweeper. If I had a son, or daughter, Mrs. Neville—God knows! God knows!—I have, I believe, one, or both, perhaps, somewhere, poor, dear, unfortunate things, I should, I dare say, be as dotingly fond of them as you are of yours. Ah! me; you see I began to speak in banter, and have ended in earnest."

The Captain passed his hand across his eyes, as he came into the recess made by the

bay window, to look into the garden, and turn his back to the vicar. That clergyman made one or two abortive attempts to destroy the effect of his former words, and utterly failed to hit the chord of sympathy that vibrated in unison with the sea captain's sorrow. He wished us good evening, and made his exit, when my mother said:

"Captain Leo, it is still my belief that your son or daughter will some day come to light, to the joy of your fatherly heart. You have good evidence that one of the children was saved without injury; and although you have failed to trace the child, it by no means follows that the child is dead, or that it will not some day be discovered. I do not know how to account for my conviction, but somehow, I seem as certain of the fact as that I shall meet my husband in a better world."

"Oh, my dear Mrs. Neville, if I had your faith I should look at life with different eyes. I cannot tell how to account for it myself, but I have noticed that I never drop

into your company without strangely finding myself in a way overcome with the remembrance of my dear little methodist. I am sure she loved me with deep devotion, for she knew that I loved her with a great heart. You know, Mrs. Neville, that I have a disposition to be noisy, blustering, and sailor-like, when I am in company with parsons of all sorts, and you know also that I reverence true virtue, love worth, love religion; but cant and hypocrisy I hate as I hate the devil, and cowardice in an Englishman. I am sure to offend good manners in the presence of clergymen, if they ever begin to talk cant about future things. You are the only person who gives me any hope—you save me from despair."

"To despair is terrible, Captain Leo," said my mother, tenderly, "especially to a man of your warm heart and concentration of affection; do not despair, but watch and wait."

"Well, well, Mrs. Neville, like a giant re-

freshed with new wine, I will bid you good evening, and let me tell you, Master Harry, *sub-rosa*—that while my brother, Sir Langton, is a strict churchman, and would be pleased to help you to take a turn at Cambridge, for holy orders as it is called, he could not honestly help you to live at Hackney while you qualify yourself for a dissenter's pulpit—but—the old sea captain has no such scrupulous notions, so that, if your inclination is to follow the steps of your father, I will supply you with the means—that's all, that's all—be true to your own heart, my boy; good-bye. Good evening, Mrs. Neville."

My mother came into the bay window recess for more light, as the sun was going down; for she began sewing with might and main, determined to finish the things for Mary that evening before she went to bed; and, if possible, to send them down to the Vicarage. As she stood up to work, for there was still sufficient light, I said, "shall I read to you a little?" she answered, "No, Harry, I want

to talk. I cannot for the life of me understand how Mary's husband can give such false views of other people's opinions and wishes. What do you think—"

"I have determined one thing, mother, that's certain—I shall neither go to Oxford nor Cambridge. Sir Langton's generosity is nevertheless worthy of our best thanks."

"Exactly," said my mother. "I wish that some clue could be found that the Captain's child could be brought to his bosom. It would be like the dead returning from the grave."

"How long has the child been lost sight of, mother?"

"Eighteen years next Michaelmas-day, at night."

"Do you know under what circumstances the child was lost?"

"Not exactly—oh no; no one knows, I think. I will tell you some day all that I have learned respecting the matter. What I do know is from the Captain himself, and it

seems that the mother's life was sacrificed at the same time; but how, he has never informed me. I fear that your resolve not to go to either of the Universities will give the Vicar much umbrage, for I fear he has some underlying motive, some design, which will be influenced thereby. We must watch and wait."

CHAPTER II.

A GENTLEMAN, A CHRISTIAN, A CLERGYMAN.

THE ANGLE HOUSE was a freehold property of my father's, and he left it to my mother by will. It stood at the north side of the Green of Timberton, very pleasantly situated. It most likely took its name from the shape of the walls, for there was no particular style of architecture belonging to it, but by whom it was so named I could never learn. The house was larger than it appeared from any external view, owing to its compact construction.

It had four wings of equal length, whose gables faced the cardinal points of the compass. The centre walls made a square room, standing also in the same position as the four wings, which induced my father to make the most minute measurement of the whole building, which resulted in his conviction that it was originally intended to be a perfect "Taautic Cross," the great symbol of the most ancient form of theological faith. This construction gave to the external form twelve angles, corresponding to the twelve signs of the Zodiac. To a superficial view, the angles of the walls would strike the eye more forcibly as a characteristic, than its Taautic, cruciform shape, and this, doubtless, was the cause of its being called the Angle House.

My father endeavoured, not in vain, to discover some particulars of the person by whom the house was built. The chief entrance was at the gable facing the south, but originally it was undoubtedly at the north. There were also four stones which

had the remains of astronomical figures, or symbols, one at each wing, in the centre of the gable. The east one was a circle, or boss, or rude globe, cut in low relief—most likely a symbol of the rising sun. The west was a crescent; the south was a groove cut in the stone, with a ball in the centre, the ends of the groove pointing east and west, as if it marked the meridian, while the north gable had a rude star, signifying the pole. From the east, round by the north to the west, a high wall enclosed a good garden with fruit trees; the front of the house being cultivated, as flower beds with shrubs, and a low fence of posts and chains which separated it from the village Green. The greatest portion of the village was on the north-east side of the Angle House.

My mother finished the sewing for my sister's children before she went to bed, although she had been sitting up nearly all the previous night with a dying woman. The work was sent to the Vicarage early in

the morning, but she did not come down to breakfast until two hours beyond her usual time. For many reasons I waited breakfast for her, and when we had finished we still sat with the breakfast things before us, talking over the remarks of the past evening, when the Vicar entered the room suddenly. His doing so created a little surprise, for he was not in the habit of calling so early in the day. The moment my mother saw who it was, she said—

"Why, whatever has happened that you are here so early to-day? Is anything the matter with Mary, or the children?"

"It is enough for you to know that there is something the matter with me, for I consider that I was grossly insulted last evening by the way you and your genius of a son crossed all my purposes, that I have long endeavoured to bring about solely for your good and his good, of which he shows himself unworthy. You have made me out to Sir Langton Elliott, but little better than a liar. It is

disgraceful—it is an unbearable insult after all the interest I have taken for the welfare of such a conceited sectarian puppy."

I cannot say whether I felt the greater indignation or contempt for the Rev. William Rushworth, or sorrow that one so untruthful should hold such an honourable and sacred position. I felt my face blushing, nay, burning

"To take him by his hair and bend his neck,"

for though he was a larger frame of humanity than myself, and of settled strength, being forty-three years of age, I could not help thinking he was a coward—for meanness of spirit and fawning sycophancy generally go with that quality combined with arrogance. As my mother was present I only rose up and walked to the window, well knowing that she would reply to him with much more discretion. She calmly said—

"Let me tell you this much, William Rushworth, 'that which is crooked cannot be made straight,' and that you altogether over-

rate your influence with Sir Langton Elliott, if you suppose that his benevolent offers to Harry arise from appreciation of your virtue; and you still more deceive yourself if you think that I shall turn into a crooked path because you choose to walk therein. I should be very sorry indeed if your example had any weight with Harry in this matter. I do not pretend to dive into your purposes, but I am quite sure that they cannot be good, if they cannot be secured, but by false representation and an oblique policy."

"You need not trouble yourself, Mrs. Neville, about my purposes, but mind your own affairs."

"I do so continually, and did so many years before you were born, and it would be well for you to make a personal application of your own remarks"—added my mother calmly—"and I am quite sure that neither myself nor Harry shall trespass upon your affairs, for obvious reasons."

"For what reasons—obvious reasons—and

pray may I be allowed to ask what your obvious reasons are?"

"Of course you may ask, and I, moreover, will tell you that those obvious reasons are, we do mind our own affairs and leave other people's alone. You had really better go home to your own study and reconsider your conduct."

"I don't want your advice, Mrs. Neville, let me tell you."

This, my brother-in-law, the Vicar of Timberton, spoke so malevolently and fiercely that I was constrained to say—

"You don't want advice, but you require it, for you seem to have forgotten to whom you are speaking."

At this he strided about the room backward and forward, more like a vexed hyena, his large eyes wide open, and his large mouth pinched up as if ready to burst with his own fury. My mother still sat composedly in her chair following his movements with intelligent surprise, and it seemed to me that her serenity of

manner, so strikingly contrasting with his restless passion, provoked him more than my words. He at length relieved himself as follows—

"I won't have any of your puerile impudence, but let me tell you also that henceforth I shall abandon you to your blindness and folly and sectarian perversity, and will have no more to do with such a low-minded fellow; so you had better keep away from the Vicarage, Mr. Harry Neville."

"I shan't require a second intimation," I said, and bowed to him. He went on saying—

"Sir, your conduct is a disgrace to the family—away with you—pshaw—mark my words, the day will come when you will repent in dust and ashes your insolent conduct toward me and Sir Langton Elliott. I shall henceforth endeavour to—" He hesitated a moment, and I added—"to justify your own obliquity of conduct by a series of such actions, vainly supposing you can create

the means which will bring the fulfilment of your prognostication."

He looked at me with more than sternness, for his eyes had a fierce expression, which was not warranted by my words, nor by the circumstance relating to the matter which had taken place. We both suspected from his behaviour that he had cherished designs of which we had no idea, of a kind not over creditable to him, either as a man or a Vicar. As he was about to address his words to me, my mother interposed.

"I cannot imagine what your motives are, or why you allow yourself to be angry about a matter which requires the calmest deliberation; for whatever view we take of the question it must be evident to every sincere mind and truthful heart—"

"I tell you again, you need not trouble about my motives; I do not see that you have any right to question them:" the Vicar said, angrily "Besides, I do not want to hear your fine speeches about sincere

minds and truthful hearts, for I know you can talk all day about that sort of dissenters' rubbish. I have had more than enough to do, to cure your daughter of the same propensity. If it were not for the respect which I have for your grey hairs, I should not trouble myself to listen to what you say; but let me tell you, Mrs. Neville, I have no such respect for your son, whose whims and conceits, however ridiculous, are swallowed by you as Gospel truth, to use your sectarian form of speech. I say, Madam, that the insult which I received last evening, has exonerated me from all further effort to facilitate his introduction to a respectable position in society."

"I am very glad to hear it, Mr. Rushworth," I added, "and as I have never asked you to trouble yourself with my affairs, but have more than once told you that I had no faith in the wisdom of your proceedings, I am not under any obligation to thank you for the crisis which your uprightness has produced."

He replied fiercely, "Sir, your impudence

and ignorance does honour to your paternal origin, and your low and grovelling views and tastes, qualify you to be the husband of a mean shopkeeper's bastard daughter. I shall henceforth treat you as you deserve. You may rush headlong to ruin in your own head-strong way, and give up yourself to the scum which seems so congenial to your nature."

To this I briefly said, "Mr. Rushworth, your remarks last night created a suspicion in my mind, that you were cherishing the designs of a knave, and now I find your words show you are a fool." I knew my mother entertained a very high opinion of the person to whom the Vicar alluded, Mrs. Wilson, or Dame Wilson, as she was usually called, nor did she for one moment countenance the scandal cast upon her character by his remarks. I also knew that she suspected that I entertained some pleasant emotions towards the young lady so contemptuously spoken of by her village pastor.

My mother said, with calm dignity of manner, and without moving her hands, which were resting on the table, "William Rushworth, you are the Vicar of this village, and my daughter's husband; if it were not so, I should certainly order you out of my presence, for your conduct is violent and offensive, and altogether unbecoming a gentleman, a Christian or a clergyman. You have indeed inflicted severer wounds than can be healed by vapid apologies. If you have any interested motive, or any designs connected with any far calculating policy, cherish them in your own heart, if they are of an honourable nature, if not, cast them out as foul spirits, and in either case keep them to yourself, and henceforth cease to trouble about me or Harry. It shall be my endeavour to do towards you good for evil, but if you show this unseemly conduct again, I shall be under the necessity of acting in self-defence. You certainly ought to be the last person in the parish to reproach a respect-

able woman upon the idle gossip and scandal of badly-disposed persons. As the Vicar, you ought to set a better example. You would deem yourself grossly insulted, and would be so too, if any person spoke of your niece in that manner; and because she lives with you, to infer that she was your illegitimate daughter. I am ashamed of you—truly ashamed of such mean conduct and scandalous insinuations."

My mother's manner and character commanded his silence, but the mind of William Rushworth was not easily impressible by reproof unless the reproof came from one whom he considered in a position to advance his purposes, and when exposed to the notice of the public. To convince him was next to an impossibility, for no argument was of any weight when put into the scale opposed to his intentions; no instance was of any force if it reflected or militated against his schemes. His feelings were as hard as steel. His disposition seemed to delight in giving torture of

mind and inflicting agony of heart. It was almost destitute of humane appreciation. He was as cruel in spirit as a tiger, and as unfeeling and passionless therein as a cat with a mouse. Some shades of this spirit had often shown themselves in him towards others, but such unmasked manifestations had not before appeared at the Angle House. A cloud had fallen upon the brow of my sister, which too clearly showed that her soul was not at peace. This fact had often given my mother much anxiety; but as she had, in common with dissenters generally, certain notions about the dealings of the Spirit with the heart, she in part attributed the gloom of her thoughts and subdued manner of life to the operations of Grace. The development of the Vicar's spirit this morning had thoroughly undeceived her, and with the quick instinct of a woman and a mother, she placed the gloom of her daughter Mary to the true cause.

My mother disdained to notice the insult

offered to the memory of my father. It was a gratuitous insult, which she regarded with silent contempt. She knew that his character was pure, stainless in life, and had been dignified by noble actions, and that he had gone to the grave in honour and peace. She knew that the glory of a man does not consist in his pedigree, but in his character; but she also knew the ancestors of the Nevilles were quite as respectable as the Rushworths, and that greater men were amongst them than he could boast; but of this she spoke not. As the icy-hearted Vicar had directed his insulting language to me in a pointed fashion, and coupled my paternity with the bastard daughter of a shopkeeper and such scum, I own I felt a different impulse than that which actuated my mother. I turned sharply upon my rev. brother-in-law and said—

"Sir, the character of my father cannot be damaged by the slanderous insinuations of such a man as you, and it is another instance of your blindness to provoke comparisons in

that point, as your paternal ancestor happens to have gone to the grave convicted of forgery, and that was not the only vice of his which I fear did not die with him. These are matters in which you deceive yourself, in supposing they are unknown at the Angle House: for decency sake, do not talk about paternity. Whatever Dame Wilson may be, I do not pretend to know; but I do know that it is, as my mother says, a shameful thing of any man, especially of one in your position, to endeavour to blast the reputation of a respectable woman by scandalous insinuations."

Just as I said this there was a knocking at the hall door, which happily put a stop to the angry conversation, for, as it happened, the very person whose character had been assailed was introduced—Mrs. Wilson.

CHAPTER III.

A FORTUNE TOLD, THE VICAR CHECKMATED, LEO SINGS OF GLORY.

When Dame Wilson came into the room she was not a little surprised to find the breakfast things still on the table. As she was a woman of no ordinary share of common sense, with a quick eye, and a keen understanding, a moment's glance assured her that the conversation which had preceded her appearance had not been of a sweet or serene nature. She apologized for her visit, and was about to leave, but my mother insisted

upon her taking a seat, evidently glad to have the chance of putting an end to a painful scene. The Vicar looked at Dame Wilson with his usual sternness and hauteur—but she made him a respectful bow according to her usual custom—but which he generally treated with more or less rudeness, because he thought a mere shopkeeper ought to curtsey and not bow to a gentleman in his position as Vicar of Timberton. Dame Wilson, not the least disconcerted by his manner, made kind inquiries after the health of Mrs. Rushworth and the young people, to which he replied with a brevity too sharp to be courteous. In a moment after, he made his exit, without ceremony or observation; but, as his eye furtively passed over my face as he went out, it had a sulphury fierceness, which plainly revealed his inward feeling. My reference to the character of his father took him by surprise, for he had not the remotest idea that I, or any person in Timberton knew anything about him. How that knowledge reached the

Angle House was a mystery, and his manner clearly showed that my mother and I knew more of his antecedents than was pleasant, and that we suspected him of some latent purpose Whatever that purpose might be, and however honourable in itself, he seemed to have a consciousness that we thought the means by which he sought and would still seek to achieve that object were disreputable.

His dislike of Dame Wilson was a matter not quite easy to understand, for there was nothing whatever in her personal appearance, manners, or character, calculated to give offence to persons of fastidious taste. She was nearly sixty years old, but so fresh in health that she looked much younger, and her clear colour was not her only attraction, for she must have been very handsome when young, and she was still in the possession of much personal beauty. Her fine eyebrows, compactly and gently curved over bright blue eyes, which sparkled with keen intelligence and loyalty as serenely as ever; nor had

they lost any of their power to please and command respect. There was about her personal shape that peculiar contour caused by an increase of stoutness, which, in a person of her age, added a touch of dignity to her natural grace. In this particular of personal appearance, as well as in general style of manners, she strikingly resembled my mother. This was not a mere fancy, for they were often mistaken for sisters when they were together from home, and amongst people to whom they were strangers. They were friends of many years' standing.

As there was some mystery about the coming of Dame Wilson to Timberton, which the Vicar could not unravel, and which she once told him was not his business—and that it would be more to his credit to leave alone, and might in the end prove more satisfactory to him—he conceived a strong prejudice against her, and never behaved strictly courteous to her whenever they met at my mother's, or any other place.

My words had clearly shown the Vicar that we knew more about his paternity than he suspected; and, as he knew Dame Wilson's antecedents were unknown at Timberton and the neighbourhood, he seemed all at once to have connected our knowledge with her, for which cause he was more rude to her this morning than usual.

The object of Dame Wilson's morning call was to invite my mother to spend the next afternoon and evening with her, as it was the first of June, and the sixtieth birthday of that village notable. This matter being arranged, she rose to depart, and my mother accompanied her to the front garden gate. Mrs. Neville and Mrs. Wilson were more delicately courteous in this particular than any other persons who have come under my observations. There was not a pin to choose between them, for they seemed to do the exact thing by instinct, and yet their manners were fully formed before they ever met.

Dame Wilson's shop was advantageously

situated in the middle of the village. It was a good, substantial stone house, of a better class than those which form most villages; but strictly speaking, the shop was an off-shoot, and brick-built, by the prior occupier, thirty years ago, forming a new wing to the house. This shop had two large windows in it, and the door between these was decorated with a heavy bronze knocker. These windows were always as well decorated or set out as any in provincial towns, with the drapery and grocery things sold by the lady shopkeeper. It was, therefore, a matter of gentle surprise to people who came for the first time to the village on a visit, to find a shop of such stylish character, so unusual in such places at that period. Nor were the people of the place indifferent to the influence which radiated from the shop, for young, and old, and middle-aged delighted to show a chance visitor those windows of Dame Wilson as one of the "Lions of Timberton."

The house part, speaking of it as opposed

to the shop, had four full-sized windows, with diamond panes, also facing the street, while the long, rather low room over the shop, was dignified with two sash windows in front; projecting over the shop, was a broad ledge guarded by a rail, so that flower pots, with creeping plants and evergreens, intermixed, gave indications that the folks who lived inside were not devoid of all taste. The entire front of the stone part of the house was covered with ivy, and climbing monthly roses, strangely intermixed, but for the most part clustering round the windows, the blossoms of which might have peeped into the very neat maiden bed chambers by moonlight, or early summer mornings; but as they were not endowed with eyes, as we in our wisdom suppose, they contented themselves with diffusing their delicious odour into the rooms through the open windows, and wooing the eyes of the inmates to gaze on the beauty of their form and colour. There was, in fact, an air of refinement about the external ap-

pearance of the house, not often found in either town or village pertaining to a dwelling place of such proportions.

Such was the abode of "Dame Wilson, licensed to deal in tea, coffee, tobacco, and snuff," as the sign-board over the shop door testified.

She was a maiden lady, and had lived in that house some twenty years, and in no other in Timberton. She took the house of the prior occupier, who was the owner of the freehold, on a lease for seven years, with the option of renewing it at the expiration for seven or fourteen years at the same rent. She also took the stock-in-trade at a valuation, which at that time amounted to over three hundred pounds, a fact at once showing that the shop was of more mark than village shops in general, and that Dame Wilson was not without some means; and that she was a woman of considerable energy, for in this transaction no male adviser or helper appeared to give assistance or counsel.

When she entered the business she hired a strong servant girl to live with her, and therein displayed her keenness of understanding, for the girl became a most invaluable assistant, and confidential and trustworthy woman.

Every person has a tendency more or less to some form of utterance, which is, of course, a reflection of a prior form of thought into which they fall again and again, until a habitude of mind is formed, which shoots up afterwards like an instinctive feeling. The nature of this recurring condition of thought, is, to the moral philosopher and psychologist, an important fact, and when clearly understood, a kind of key-note to the character is discovered. It is a part and portion of conventional education, to conceal from observation those points which would enable another person to read the inward character. Concealment and hypocrisy are in a marked degree a habit and a vice of civilization, nor does it appear easy to con-

ceive of society as existing without them, while the principles of morals, as now recognised, are accepted as legitimate truth. In proportion as men and women are sincere and truthful, and resolutely honest with themselves, so will they be indifferent about the discoveries which others may make of their inward life, by those forms of thought and words, so often recurring, of which I am speaking. In this respect there was a striking resemblance between my mother and Dame Wilson. The latter seemed to have one abiding principle in her mind, and not the less so the former, and which they equally carried into the daily affairs of life; but Dame Wilson's idea took the form of words, which has at times been mis-used by over-officiously religious people, but in that sense she never used the words which made the vocal symbol of her thoughts—namely, "a sense of duty." At all times, and under all circumstances, the inward feeling lived in her mind, and very frequently a "sense of duty"

were words which fell from her lips. Although she enjoyed life with that keen sense which generally accompanies good health and a vigorous constitution, still, a sense of duty was the principle which formed the basis of all her actions of every-day life. Whenever those words fell from her rosy mouth, for it was rosy, despite her age, and as unwrinkled as at twenty-five, for her teeth were still pearly and even, they were followed by a smiling compression of her somewhat full lips, which, to a nice observer, had a touch of hardness and sarcasm, or it might be, of stern determination.

The niece of Dame Wilson was pretty much a juvenile edition of herself, which is equal to saying that she was more beautiful than the generality of young women, and yet she was not by any means of that faultless proportion of features which is recognised as the standard of Grecian beauty. Her nose was rather too short, and too wide on the ridge, and yet it was well suited to the

compact character of her brow and chin. The shape of her eyes was as like her aunt's as possible, but the colour was deeper, and their lashes were longer and very dark, which, hanging over blue eyes, gave a singular fascination to their motion and expression. Her hair was of a rich dark brown—as dark as possible, yet without any of the peculiar tinge which would connect it with black hair. The reflection of light upon it gave rather a golden hue, not the silvery sheen which would have classed it with the sable or raven black.

Like her aunt, Jessie Wilson was of middle stature; a bright happy girl of eighteen or nineteen summers, as nimble and agile as an antelope, and almost as uncertain in her movements as a young kitten at play. She had ruby lips of extraordinary beauty, which frequently assumed the most bewitching pout, sufficient

"To shake the saintship of an anchorite."

Her manner of dress corresponded to her character, for with her airy muslin-dresses, floating ribbons, curling hair rolling about under her coquettish straw hat, with azure trimmings, she was the very personification of light-hearted glee and merriment. But do not think she was always thoughtless, for there was a deep well-spring of truthfulness and earnestness in her soul, which at times made her beautiful eyes assume an exalted expression, which indicated the latent element of a higher life purpose. She, beyond all doubt, deeply loved and venerated her aunt, notwithstanding her somewhat starched and precise way of talking and dressing, both of which she knew were done from "a sense of duty."

Dame Wilson had taken care of her when a motherless infant; she had provided for her through her childhood, as if she had been her own daughter; she had endeavoured to give her a good education—the best the neighbourhood could afford; and she had constantly exerted

her ability to expand Jessie's intellect, and cultivate her heart with skill and assiduity. Jessie was now to her aunt as her only child, and according to all outward appearance at Timberton, no other known being in the world was related to either.

Under these conditions, it is no wonder that Dame Wilson loved her niece as much as if she had been her own daughter, and all the circumstances of their past lives in a measure gave countenance to the general belief that Jessie was in reality her own child. This conviction had been for the most part confirmed by the insinuations and remarks of the Vicar; but the opinion which he formed was, to say the least of it, unmanly and unbecoming him, at whose church both aunt and niece were regular and exemplary attendants, for Mrs. Wilson scarcely ever missed going to church whenever there was service, Sunday or Saints days, from the time she came to live in the village, until the time of which I am speaking. She did that also

from "a sense of duty," though she had none of that cant form of so-called religious life, which consists in external appearances.

It is true, that after Dame Wilson had been installed in her shop some year and a half, a little girl of about one year old, was brought by a respectable woman to her house, but no one knew from where she came or who she was, and no person ever saw that woman return. It was concluded that the child belonged to Dame Wilson in a maternal sense, and as she was shortly after christened Jessie Wilson, the belief was general that the mother and daughter, who had been divided for a time, were again united, under a plea that Jessie was her sister's child, who was left without father or mother.

When I asked my mother her opinion of this matter, as I did for a special reason, which will hereafter appear, she said, "Harry, my opinion of Dame Wilson is of the highest kind. I believe her to be a very truthful woman. I believe Jessie is what

she calls her, the orphan child of her sister, but whether that sister was married or not I cannot say; I do not say that I have not formed an opinion; but I am sure that Dame Wilson is her aunt. This was your father's view of the question. He used to say 'If Dame Wilson had been the mother of the child, nothing could have been easier for her from the first, to have represented herself as a widow with one child, and in a place where nobody knew anything whatever about her, nobody would have questioned her statement of such an every-day fact. But' said he, 'here she comes and gives herself out as a maiden lady in all truthfulness, and in a year's time after, takes a child into her house as the orphan of her sister; neither thinking nor suspecting anything could arise reflecting dishonour upon her own reputation, which, if the child had been an orphan when she came to Timberton, or her own offspring, might have been so easily prevented. To suppose otherwise than as Dame Wilson stated at the time,

is to suppose that she was little better than a natural fool.' I have since then had additional proofs of her truthfulness."

I own that I was then of the same opinion as my mother, nor have I since seen any reason to correct it. I own that the person whom the Vicar of Timberton designated the bastard of a shopkeeper, was a person of no small interest to me, for I had long cherished the purest emotions towards her, but whether she knew it or not, I was for the most part without evidence, beyond my general knowledge of life, which assured me that young women are by no means slow at discoveries of this nature. I had not, at that time any proof that she reciprocated my feelings.

It was a beautiful sunny afternoon, that first of June when Dame Wilson was sixty years old, and my mother went to drink tea with her, and spend the evening. It must be here stated that though my mother did not much visit the people of the place, she was a good deal visited; but Dame Wilson never

paid a visit, in the shape of taking a friendly cup of tea, or supper, with any person in the place or neighbourhood, except with my mother. The reasons for this were never very clear, but somehow or other they took the general shape of a necessity for her to stay at home from a "sense of duty." She was, however, of a very social nature, and was frequently visited by her customers, who were generally well-pleased with her company. Her manners were very engaging, though for the most part a little too precise, or lady-like, for the taste of farmers and their wives; yet no person could even spend an hour in her company without leaving her well satisfied with the way he or she had been attended to and entertained.

That afternoon Dame Wilson was a picture well worth the study of an artist, and of being transferred to canvas. To have given her, my mother, and Jessie, with fidelity and truthfulness, would have made the reputation of any artist. Her hair, which was slightly

streaked with silver, was smoothly divided under a cap of the finest pillow lace, with closely goffered borders, lace tucker under her chin, lace lappets, and a high mob of fine net and lace. Her dress was of stiff rustling black silk, short-waisted, and open in front, under which were fold upon fold of white muslin, fastened with a plain gold pin, while over her shoulders was thrown a small black lace shawl, which hung about her figure in natural and graceful folds.

My mother's dress was of a similar character, but her cap was of lighter material, and the dress of a silvery grey, with an embroidered chemisette instead of muslin. She had also white cuffs, an article which did not appear on Dame Wilson that afternoon.

After Dame Wilson and my mother had taken a walk round the garden, for there was a large one attached to the house, they made their way to the sitting-room over the shop, which was the largest room in the house. In addition to the sash windows which

faced the street, it had one which commanded the garden, orchard, and a field, at the farther side of which the trees that enclosed the Vicarage were a prominent group in the rural view. There was a side staircase from the counting-house to this room, which made it convenient for Dame Wilson or Jessie to attend to the shop, although the chief approach was from the stone-built portion of the house.

The chief subject of their conversation was the circumstance that Sir Langton Elliott was about to leave Timberton Mansion, and go to the South of France, or Italy, for the benefit of Lady Elliott's health, each of them fearing that she would not return a living woman.

The kind offer of the Baronet to meet the cost of my going to college was also talked of, and the interest the Vicar had used with him to achieve that object as reported in the village, which my mother was obliged to correct, which was sufficient to

induce Dame Wilson to correct also as circumstances transpired.

Jessie was now fully competent to manage all the affairs of the shop without consulting her aunt, but habit had made that practice familiar, and she continued to do so, because she felt that her aunt would like to know everything that transpired, as a matter of course, from "a sense of duty."

As there had been a rap at the front door and Ruth, the servant maid, had been talking rather louder than usual with a gipsy woman, who wanted to tell her fortune, the aunt inquired of Jessie, when she went into the sitting-room, what had been said and acted at the front door.

"Oh, nothing of any consequence," said she, "only a gipsy woman wanting to tell my fortune and Ruth's; she offered to tell both for a sixpence, and as it was your birthday, aunt, I offered to treat Ruth if she would have her fortune told. She laughed and said 'she did not want to know what was to

come in particular, yet she thought she should like to know if she should ever be obliged to change her name;' so she held out her hand and I put a sixpence into it for the gipsy. She told her a mess of stuff about settling in life, and having twins dressed in long frocks at their christening, whose names would be Benjamin and Jemima, and that her husband would stutter, but become a master carpenter."

My mother then asked—

"And pray tell me, Jessie, did the gipsy tell your fortune, also? Did you cross your palm with silver, and hold it out for her inspection?"

"Oh no," said Jessie, "I have no faith in palmistry; besides, I am contented with my home and my aunt, with my birds and my dormice, with my friends, with my books, with—"

Bang, bang, bang, sounded the knocker, when Jessie said, "There, that is the Captain, I'll lay my life to a nut-shell."

"Believe me, my child, 'a sense of duty' prompts me to tell you that all wagers are foolish, and if your life depended on your wager, your days would soon be at an end; for it is the Vicar's knock, not the Captain's."

Before this was all said, Jessie was half way down stairs; yet she, with her clear voice, said, "Then I wish he was at Jericho." As her aunt suspected, so it was, and when she returned to them she reported the conversation which had passed. She began—

"Yes, aunt, it was the Vicar sure enough. He asked if he could see you; but I told him you were engaged, for I suspected his business, and thought it was not necessary to disturb your quiet—so he said—

"'Oh, no—by no means—don't call Dame Wilson down stairs.'

"'I did not intend, sir,' I said, 'unless you want to see her on particular business.'

"He looked at me sternly, and said, 'I suppose Mrs. Neville and your mother—'

"'My aunt, you mean, sir,' I said.

"'Yes, your aunt are laying their heads together about this same matter, which brings me here, namely, the confirmation next Monday.'

"'Oh, no, sir,' I added; 'when you came and gave that thundering knock with the strength of a Goliath, I was telling them that Ruth and I had just had our fortunes told by a gipsy.' While I was speaking this, he held up a pair of small scales, the chain of one of them was accidentally hooked over the beam, so that they did not balance. Looking at me, he said—

"'Let me tell you, Jessie Wilson, 'a false balance is an abomination to the Lord—but a just weight is his delight.' Do you call these scales just? I fear you and your elders here are not exactly what you ought to be, with your gipsy fortune-telling and unequal balances.'

"I said, with unusual gentleness—for you know, aunt, I am always gentle when I am in earnest—'I beg your pardon, sir, but

allow me to say you do not know how to hold the scales correctly—the chain is across the beam—look here, it would puzzle a greater divine than the Vicar of Timberton to discover any difference in these scales. 'Judge not that ye be not judged, for with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged.' Pray, sir, did you call to see my aunt about my being confirmed?'

"He looked at me with a queer smile, and said—

"'I suppose, with constant use, your scales soon get out of order.'

"'Oh, no,' I added: 'constant use keeps them in fine condition. They are like the human conscience, the more you use it the quicker it is to show when it leans on the right or the wrong side, while those scales, which you see hanging up there unused, would be found out of order like a man who never uses his conscience.'

"'Upon my word, my fortune-hunting young lady, you talk like a Ranter. Pray,

where did you learn all your knowledge of these matters?'

"'Sir, I am not a Ranter, and never was in any place of worship that I remember but the Church of England.'

"'Indeed!' he added quickly. 'I am very glad to hear you say so, Miss Wilson, and by-the-by, I called to see about your being made ready for the confirmation. Miss Wilson—as a church-woman, it is your duty—a duty as a Christian, which you have too long neglected, I am rather surprised that your aunt has so long allowed you to hold aloof from this rite.'

"'I have no intention of being confirmed this time,' I said rather pointedly, 'for I have not finished fortune-hunting, and confabulation with gipsies.'

"'But I have your name down,' he said solemnly, 'and remember Miss Wilson, 'He or she that putteth the hand to the plough and looketh back is not fit for the kingdom of Heaven.'

"'Just so,' I said, 'but I did not put my name down, nor put my hand to—'

"He interrupted me by saying, 'That was done for you in your baptism, and it is the bounden duty of your Godfather and Godmothers to—'

"'To do what,' said Captain Leo, who came into the shop that instant, without the Vicar's seeing him, and his strong voice suddenly ringing like a great bell, startled the Vicar as if he were shot. He repeated again, 'To do what? ay, man, why don't you tell us. Jessie and I want to know all about our Godfathers and Godmothers. Why my voice made you jump, like a coward at the sound of a pop gun. I would not be a divine for all Christendom, if it made me as nervous as you, Mr. Rushworth; ay, man, if you had a guilty conscience you could not be worse. What's it all about Jessie, my bonnie lassie?'

"'Oh, Captain Leo,' I said, 'the Vicar wants me to be confirmed; but I do

not feel disposed just now ; I have been very naughty to-day, and had my fortune told by one of the 'devil's daughters,' as the folks call the gipsies. Besides, I do not feel able to renounce the vanities of this wicked world ; but I am getting along pretty well, for I can easily renounce, and, if necessary, denounce the pomps of it, for they are never likely to be any temptation to me.'

"The sight of the good-hearted Captain set my tongue running like water over the mill-dam in a great flood, and I hardly know what I said, but the Vicar said, 'I fear that the influence of your example, Captain Leo, will have greater results than you anticipate. I wish you had more of your noble brother's genuine piety."

"'So do I, Vicar,' said the Captain, 'and I am sure a double dose would strengthen your nervous system, for it seems 'shocking bad' for a man who believes he has a mansion in the skies.' He then clapped his hands

boisterously, and began singing in a gruff under tone,

'Glory, glory, glory,—away we go—
Glory, glory, glory, ay hi oh.'

"The Vicar, with a cold dry laugh, and with what I call his funny look, said, 'I will leave you with your glory, and wish you good morning.'

"'Good morning, forsooth,' said the Captain, 'It's past four o'clock, p.m.; what a curious way we fashionable people have of talking about time, Miss Wilson, have we not? Good morning until the sun sets, if a fellow has not dined, and no gentleman, (and all clergymen are gentlemen, by virtue of their function,) ever acknowledges that he dines before six or seven o'clock in the afternoon. How is your aunt to-day? Tell her I wish her many returns of her birthday.'

"I thanked the Captain for you, and said I knew you would feel proud and pleased by his kind inquiries and good wishes."

My mother and Dame Wilson had their quiet chat in the sitting-room, much interfered with by the rather loud and long conversation in the shop below, and although neither of them could, from "a sense of duty," listen to what was going forward, they were for many reasons pleased with the faithful narration given them by Jessie. One or two stray words reached the ears of both those elderly ladies at the close of the confabulation, which Jessie did not repeat. Her aunt, who had no interest in life, beyond what in some way related to her niece, felt as "a sense of duty," that she ought to know what the Captain had said to her, for she heard him articulate "One, of your beaux." For this reason she asked Jessie point blank, "What did he say to you about your beau? I did not know that you had any beau, my child, beside ——"

A serious question from her aunt was a thing which brought the light-hearted, yet

true hearted Jessie to her aunt's bosom in a moment. She could no more equivocate with her than she could fly to the moon. My mother was deeply interested in the matter for several reasons, and she had not before seen Jessie placed in any circumstance to call forth that depth of loving affection which was now manifested before her. Jessie at once walked up to her aunt and sat down on her rather high footstool and looked into that face which beamed upon her with the sweetest rays of maternal tenderness,

"From morn to noon—
From noon to dewy eve,"

and knew no change from year to year.

"Say about my beau?" Jessie began, "he said, 'I say, Jessie, I hear that one of your beaux is about to leave Timberton, what shall you do when he is gone?' 'Why, look out for another,' I said, 'to be sure, Captain Leo, as the press-gangs do, when you captains

want seamen, and if you can't press one fellow you look after another; I shall do the same.'

"'Capital, bravo! well done, Jessie, my bonnie lassie, you are just the sort of a woman to preserve the glory of England.'

"I then said 'one of my beaux, Captain? why you seem to think I have several bows to my string. May I ask you the name of the foolish noodle, for a man must be a soft to be satisfied with the divided affections of his sweetheart.'

The girl paused, yet still looking into her aunt's face. My mother said she felt exceedingly anxious to observe the expression which accompanied Jessie's truthful relation of the conversation, but her back was toward her, so she observed more keenly the movement of her hands and figure. Dame Wilson looked steadily into the upturned face, and seemed to hesitate between two objects, and the same thoughts which divided her mind

also rose up before the mental vision of my mother. The most natural thing in the world for Dame Wilson to do, was to ask her niece what name the Captain mentioned, in reply to the question which Jessie had put to him —but on that hung interests to each person present, and to one not then present, of the most momentous character. The pause had been just long enough to make even my usually calm and self-possessed mother feel uneasy, when Jessie, as if fully understanding not only the feelings of the person before her, but also of the person behind, said, "The Captain snapped his finger in my face, and said 'there's many a slip between the cup and the lip,' but if I were twenty years younger, Jessie, my bonnie lassie, I should be jealous of such a smart slip of a man, and send a press-gang to walk him off to sea, while you could say Jack Robinson.'"

Dame Wilson respired freely, and my mother also, when Jessie stood up, still

keeping her back towards my mother, until Ruth came with the tea things. When she turned, there was an evident absence of her usual colour, especially in her rosy lips, and about her dimpled chin.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RED-FRECKLED RING FINGER.—THE QUESTION ASKED.

During tea time the subject of the gipsy's fortune telling came under consideration again, for it will be remembered that the sound of the knocker called Jessie Wilson below, leaving the matter of her fortune in abeyance. The subject was taken up by my mother, who referred to the words of Jessie, and said—

"So you have no faith in palmistry, and did not hold out your hand to the gipsy?

She told your fortune nevertheless, I presume; may we hear the substance of the matter?"

"Oh yes, my dear," said her aunt, "let us hear how much you had for your money; two fortunes told for sixpence does not seem very dear. Yet I don't know, but—I remember once paying sixpence to have my fortune told, like a foolish girl, which I incline to think was a very dear purchase, for it caused me many, many bitter days and months, and perhaps in some strange way much influenced my life, and yet I never seemed to believe a word the old gipsy said to me. Still there was a continual recurrence of the chief thought, until it formed a kind of spot in my mind, which seemed and really did grow larger and larger until it was like a cloud overshadowing my feelings. I have often thought of the circumstance, Mrs. Neville, and have never yet been able to understand the kind of power it had over me. For this reason, and from a 'sense of duty' growing out of it, I should

have objected to either Jessie or Ruth having anything to do with such a thing. It is the same in all cases."

"It's for want of reflection," said my mother, "that the made up tales of fortune tellers influence young people's minds, and the imagination in early life is apt to play strange tricks, leading us to achieve those things and attain to that position which has been predicted at random, and all this in despite of our better judgment. Sometimes perhaps young people create the condition of things which secures the end prognosticated. Jessie Wilson, I hope, is too well-trained to have her mind disturbed by such trifling nonsense. I believe, my dear, your reflective faculties are too well developed to be cheated by false lights of this nature, but, come, let us hear what you had for your silver."

Jessie began—

"You know as well as I do, and much better, that there are two views at least of

everything. If I hesitate to tell you what the wrinkle-fingered old gipsy said, you might think that I do so because I believe there is some truth in her tale, and want to conceal the matter. Then, on the other hand, if I tell you every particular at once it will look as if I believed every word as gospel, and as true as bees gather honey from flowers, and bread and butter generally falls the wrong side downward. There, you see mine has fallen dab—the right way upwards, for a wonder. I'll lay my scalp to a crack-nut if I toss this slice into the air it will fall butter side downwards nine times out of ten."

"Did you ever hear any girl offer to make such wagers, Mrs. Neville. I believe she has caught that way of talking from Captain Leo, for when he comes into the shop for cigars and odd matters he always offers to lay some wager or other with Jessie, and she tries to outdo him in extravagant matters of that sort. He offered the other day to lay the flap

end of his right ear to the left end of her apron string that she could not bite the end of his thumb nail without winking and laughing."

"Yes, Mrs. Neville, I was foolish enough to lay that wager and lost; but upon my word if I had won I would have run a needle into the flap of his ear and drawn the 'claret,' as the prize fighters call it."

A pleasant laugh broke from the listeners, when Dame Wilson said, "Well, well, my dear, let us now hear the tale of the gipsy with wrinkled fingers."

"You will now hit the happy medium," my mother observed, "in which there is safety, as the learned say, and, perhaps, say wisely."

Jessie began again. "Very well then. I said, 'I shan't let you touch my fingers, and you shan't look at my hand, the inside I mean, only while I can count seven.'

"'Hey-day' she began, with a quick whine, 'hey-ho; I see you are a fine lady,

with red freckles on your ring finger, and must not be touched by the clay fingers o, a poor body; but, harkee, my lassie, your first-born son will be a nobleman, and—'

"'That's all rubbish,' I interrupted, at the same moment holding out my left hand, though she said, 'Your right, lassie, your right hand.' 'My left,' 'I added, or neither; and what you have said is as false, as it is true. I shall now count seven without stopping,' and I began, one, two, three; meanwhile the gipsy gave a glance at my hand, and then looked into my eyes, and said, 'It's as true as you will not count seven without stopping—mark!' I went on four, five, when I was obliged to stop and sneeze; then she said, triumphantly, 'Heigh-ho! a faithful husband and five children.' There, aunt, you have it all; no very bad fortune to be told me, was it Mrs. Neville? So I told Ruth to give a mug of beer and a bit of bread and beef to the wrinkle-fingered gipsy, and as you know, ran up to you. What a pity I did

not ask her when the beginning of these things would commence."

"It is very well you did not; you have heard more than will ever be true, most likely," said her aunt, when my mother rejoined—

"Oh, I can very well see that all the gipsy has said may come to pass, for if your beau is a good man he will certainly be a *noble*-man; and your husband may be, I hope will be, faithful, and five children is a common-sized family; I had that number, though two died in their infancy."

"Oh, yes," said Jessie, laughing; "who knows, I may create the means myself by which the end prognosticated may be brought about, as you say; upon my word I have half a mind to strike up to the old Captain, and if I do, I dare wager the whites of my eyes to a broken-eyed needle—that Captain Leo would leave Timberton Mansion in self-defence."

The knocker called Jessie below, when Dame Wilson observed—

"It's very strange, Mrs. Neville, is it not, that such mere chance words should have such power to settle themselves down in our minds; as it is quite clear to me those of the gipsy will into Jessie's. What do you think about the matter, Mrs. Neville?"

This simple question comprehended more than appeared on the surface, which my mother clearly perceived. She knew from several facts that I had long cherished sincere regards for Jessie, and she pretty well knew that Dame Wilson was disposed to favour my pretensions—at the same time she then knew what I did not, and which, when I did know, was the cause of much mental and moral suffering to me. My mother accordingly framed her reply in a manner which took her friend point blank. Let me distinctly state that there was no kind of trickery, no diplomatical cunning practised by these two ladies towards each other, for they were sincere friends, and in the very best sense true-hearted women.

There was, however, a keen sense of propriety in the minds of each—a delicate fear of giving pain unintentionally, by blighting any pleasant anticipation. The fact is, Captain Leo had an illegitimate son, whose mother died while the Captain was at sea: he was about twenty-five years old, and provided for handsomely. The Captain had also been his godfather, and named the boy George Willifer Elliott. At this time he was in the Army, and, though only an Ensign, the path to promotion was before him well defined. My mother had once or twice seen this dashing young officer in earnest conversation with Jessie, and was led to suspect that she would be more likely to think of him when he was away from the Mansion and with his regiment, than he would of the village shopkeeper's fascinating niece. To learn if the aunt had any idea of an attachment between them, or whether she countenanced it, if a fact, my mother said, in reply to Dame Wilson's question—

"It appears to me that if Jessie has any faith in the gipsy, and the disposition to seek the means of bringing the chief particulars to pass, it will not be by courting the Captain—but the Ensign."

Dame Wilson, as was her wont, scratched the palm of her left hand with the fore finger of the right, and said with evident surprise—

"Upon my word, Mrs. Neville, that thought never struck me."

"I believe you," said my mother, "but that is perhaps more than you or I could say of Jessie, for she is a far-seeing, quick-witted girl. I suppose she knows that the Captain is the last living heir?"

"I think she has never thought of the fact in any particular sense, though we have occasionally talked about George Willifer Elliott being made heir to the estates of Timberton. It would be singular if that should ever come to pass; dear me, how foolish it is to talk of the matter. I hope she will never entertain any idea of that young officer, for it will bring

her unhappiness and disappointment, if nothing worse. Oh, no; a thought of that shall not be entertained for a moment—no—no, I think Jessie really meant what she said, a mere joke at the expense of the Captain, as they often talk all sorts of nonsense of that kind. Will Harry walk down this evening, Mrs. Neville? Do you suppose he will go to one of the Universities? I hear that Sir Langton is anxious that he should do so immediately."

All that my mother desired she learned from the candour of her friend, but she nevertheless thought that the light and bounding mind of Jessie had leaped beyond one of sixty years. She also thought that the question, immediately put about my visit that evening, was intended to assure her, and me, through that medium, that I was an acceptable person. For this reason my mother showed her appreciation of the confidence by informing Dame Wilson the real condition of my mind as far as she knew

it, not failing to state, but judiciously that the hasty conduct of her son-in-law was the cause of much unpleasantness, not only at the Vicarage but at the Angle House. She informed her that as I was about to leave Timberton in a week or two, I should not only come down that, but perhaps most evenings, if my visits were not from any particular reasons objectionable."

Dame Wilson, who was a very stately person, and knew well how to walk up to another person in a room when she had any fact of importance to tell, instantly rose from her seat, and moved to the side of my mother, and gently laid her hand on her shoulder saying—

"I have no objection whatever. I esteem your son only second to you, Mrs. Neville; but what his opinions may be respecting my niece I cannot say, but I am not indifferent or insensible to the attentions which seem to have grown up of late between them since Harry has in a manner directed her

studies. Tell me, my dear friend, do you think, have you any reason to think, that George Willifer Elliott has endeavoured to gain the affection of Jessie?"

Before my mother could answer, Ruth came to move the tea things, and before that was accomplished, Jessie returned to the room. In a few minutes after I came to pay my respects to Dame Wilson, and hear Miss Wilson play a new piece of music which I had just received from the neighbouring town of B——.

CHAPTER V.

THE QUESTION ASKED, THE QUESTION ANSWERED.

I HAVE been for a long time convinced that love, as talked of in books, is very unlike love in reality, as exhibited between two individuals, whose minds are under strong, and, in many points, different phases of that passion. Perhaps this apparent incongruity is not so in reality, for it may be, that as there is a peculiarity in every individual which makes the distinctive identity, the description of every

thing which is an object of sensation, and of every passion of the human soul, is a reflection of the writer's mind only, and therefore is felt by others as an imperfect delineation, because it does not fully exemplify our perceptive emotions. In addition to the general resemblance of human beings and human circumstances, there are many modifications of passion in relation to this or that person—to this or that condition of things—for the love of the sanguine, will be of a different complexion from that of the bilious temperament, while that of the nervous will materially differ from both, and from the lymphatic. The various modifications are as singular as the characters brought into loving relations, nor must it be overlooked that love itself has two great characteristic features which show themselves more or less in all.

There is love as a passion, and love as a principle; though they, for the most part, are found in combination in the higher manifestations, human experience shows that

love, as a passion, is the pervading element with young people, and for this very reason the consummation of this kind of love in matrimony generally proves a temptation, a snare—and an infelicity, which makes the fireside of every day life a scene of stormy, mental, and moral warfare, when the mere honeymoon of passion has lost the blush of novelty.

Love, as a principle, starts from a different level, and it is not built upon the fluctuations of impulse, the mere excitability of the blood and fanciful ideas of felicity which are as unsubstantial as romantic, and as delusive and evanescent as they seem ecstatic to the inexperience of youth. The endless diversity of these mental and moral qualities and principles, gives results which make it impossible for any individual, however gifted, to talk of love in its broad significance, with satisfaction to every other mind.

The very absorbing nature of my emotions have led me to perform sacrifices which my

fellow men seem not able to appreciate, except as supremely foolish, and yet to me they appear the very highest form of pure devotion. I am obliged to add, the objects of them lacked the capacity of understanding or approving and admiring them. To illustrate my idea more clearly, I may refer to one or two instances, and I do so, without fearing the ridiculous appearance I may make in the estimation of the vain minded class of young men of this age, whose souls seem unable to appreciate anything higher than cigars and bitter beer, and association with certain women whose superficial development and moral training make them aspire to nothing higher than companionship with such empty-headed and selfish-hearted bipeds. I feel that I shall have the approbation of the great mass of womanhood who really do know how to understand an act of self-sacrificing devotion, and admire earnestness of truthful adoration.

When I was fourteen years old I spent a

day with a young lady, who was about a year older than myself, a great difference on her side in the ordinary course of life ; but my love was then out of the usual order. I felt that I loved her, and I told her so with a strange amount of childish simplicity and youthful passion. She was a young governess to two little girls of about seven years—twins. She was situated full three miles and a-half from my place of abode, and I walked to a certain spot every night for two years, with but very few exceptions, for no other purpose than that of seeing that dear object momentarily pass by a window, two stories high, as she accompanied the children to bed—knowing that there was not the remotest chance of my speaking to her. Thus I walked over two thousand miles in adoration of a young girl whom I loved; during which time I did not spend six hours in her company all put together, and once only had the felicity of kissing her! for which I received a sharp box on my ear. A few

evenings after I saw my Inamorata receive the salutations of a very fine youth, who removed a cigar from his divine lips, so that she inhaled the perfumes of charcoal with the incense of his love.

It is easy for my reader to say "what a fool," but let me tell you (surely in this case the gender is masculine) that I have pronounced the same judgment upon myself a great many times before you knew anything of the matter. I incline to think, nevertheless, that many of my fair readers desiderate such truthful persistence now-a-days.

The other instance to which I shall refer is in relation to the young lady here called Jessie Wilson, by whose side I was standing as she sat at the piano, when my mother and her aunt left the room to take a walk in the garden. I had loved her with all the fervour of my soul, with a soul whose purpose of will may be seen in the instance above given, and this for a longer time than there mentioned, and yet I had not up to that time

found strength of will to tell her. For three years she was daily, almost hourly, in my thoughts, and for the past year I had in a more especial manner directed her studies in drawing, in which I was considered to have some ability, if not genius—in music, which I loved passionately, and through a course of polite literature which was a mutual fascination.

I had during that period resolved hundreds of times that I would speak out my love the next time I was by her side, and we were alone—but whenever I made an attempt, my emotions choked me. Either my power of speech failed me or all idea of what I wanted to say, suddenly became obscure. Sometimes I thought Jessie knew all I wanted to say, and felt much in the same condition as myself, then again I was of opinion that she did not comprehend the bewilderment of my spirit, nor care about it. At other times there was so much tenderness in her voice, as she read to me or sung those

soul-moving ditties which give a deathless glory to our national sentimental songs, that my heart often thumped against my bosom until it was audible to her as to myself. The expression of her eyes now and then seemed to tell me that I was dear to her heart, and many a time I was on the point of recklessly breaking through all restraint, and madly clasping her to my bosom in rapturous passion, and again run all chances of having my face slapped for my love and rudeness.

The time, however, came at last, and many things to me of a serious nature conspired to the end. I had been insulted by the Vicar in relation to this matter, and his contemptuous and unjust, or rather absurd condemnation of a young woman whose character was stainless, as unsuitable for me, according to his conventional notions of propriety, had made me as a necessary consequence resolve to vindicate my appreciation of her character, by declaring

openly to her and to all the world of Timberton that I loved her.

Jessie Wilson began playing the set of quadrilles which I had brought her, but so much out of time, that I thought at first she was doing so purposely, for that was a trick which she now and then practised. A casual glance satisfied me it was not design, but arose from some strong pre-occupation of mind. I looked her earnestly in the face, into her eyes, into the depths of their brightness, and said suddenly and sharply—

"What are you thinking about, Jessie Wilson?"

She looked up hastily, and as hastily said—

"The gipsy—the—the Captain: No—the Vicar came this afternoon, and wants me to be confirmed next Monday. He was half angry with me."

I said, with a good deal of surprise, "Your thoughts seem to leap further than your

words, which slip out in a fashion unusual, and require correction. Now, after a moment's reflection, tell me what you were thinking about, that you played so falsely as to time—the Gipsy, the Captain, or the Vicar? They form a strange group if this said Gipsy of your thoughts has as much individuality of character as our friends the other two. Why do your cheeks look so rosy all of a sudden, ay? Am I not very rude to ask you such a question?"

She glanced at me for a moment, and said, "No, no; not rude, Harry Neville; you may ask me anything you like—I am sure you cannot ask—ask me a rude question, for you know better."

"But is my question a rude one, Jessie? If you think so I will withdraw it, and only say that you did not keep time."

"Oh, no, your question was natural enough, I have no objection to it, but—but—"

I added, "but it is perhaps difficult to answer truthfully, and you have it not in your nature to equivocate with me now I have asked."

"It may be so," said Jessie, as she looked out of the window, half-turning round on her music stool.

"Then I am to understand you to say that my question is not a rude one, but difficult to answer, so difficult that you—"

"Yes, that I am such a noodle, that I can as well guess why your hand and voice tremble so unusually, as you can why I blushed, if I did so. I am sure I don't blush now, I tell you what a noodle I am."

The fact was, her lips and cheeks, just before so rosy, were almost devoid of colour, yet her fine eyes shone and sparkled with more than ordinary brilliancy. I thought she slightly leaned her head towards my arm as I stood beside her, so I ventured to extend it toward her, and a moment after its

beautiful form fairly rested there. I stooped over her and said—

"Jessie—Jessie, both have resulted from the same cause: I believe you know that it is so, and if I—I—kiss your forehead it will bring back the colour to your lips and cheeks." I bent over her to do so, but my tears of rapture preceded that first kiss, and fell on her palpitating bosom.

If "Young Joy never thought of counting hours," I am perfectly sure that I never dreamed of counting the kisses passionately poured out in the ecstatic minute which followed that acknowledgment of love, and the proof which Jessie Wilson gave me that she knew how to appreciate my affections.

In her excitement, and my passionate yet affectionate rudeness, somehow or other, the profusion of her golden brown hair was trailing over her shoulders and bosom, having broken from the fillet which held it in place, which added to the delicious bewilderment of her emotion perhaps, and

that innate sense of maiden shame that ever accompanies modesty and chastity like a shadow, roused her to a clear consciousness, an intellectual perception of what had passed, and she said, with strong emphasis from excitement—

"Harry Neville, loose my hand—oh, for God's sake let me go—there, it is madness; oh! leave me, if you love me, for God's sake leave me! Harry Neville, let me go—"

In another moment Jessie Wilson had flown out of the room, but a fire was sending its thrilling energy through all my being, and as I instinctively sank on the sofa, all the familiar objects of the room became hazy, indistinct, and in motion. My brain and my heart seemed to vie with each other in beating.

When I had recovered my self-possession I went to the back window which overlooked the garden, where I saw my mother and Dame Wilson, sitting opposite each other in the summer-house, in confidential conversa-

tion, and my beautiful Jessie busily at work amongst her flower-beds. I had been more than half-an-hour in a state of delightful reverie. The idea which seemed to bring me to myself, was one springing out of the three substantives which were the immediate cause leading to the result as stated, namely the Gipsy—the Captain—the Vicar.



CHAPTER VI.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE ANGLE HOUSE.—SIR LANGTON ELLIOTT.

THE golden twilight of that first of June was still glowing in the west, when my mother and I walked quietly across the village green to the quaint old Angle House. We had remained with Dame Wilson and her beautiful niece to supper, somewhat against our original intention, for one or two unexpected circumstances had transpired which we did not calculate upon, when we individually left

home—my mother in the afternoon, and myself in the evening. A prolonged conversation of deep interest to the two elderly ladies, had kept them in the summerhouse until the shadows were gathering in the neighbouring wood. Meanwhile I had again found an opportunity to pour out the upswellings of my love, with stammering earnestness, into the listening ear of my charming Jessie. I felt too much intoxication of spirit, to bear in mind the form of words in which I gave her to understand the duration of my esteem, and the depth of my love, though every fond word that she uttered was indelibly engraved upon my heart. The quickening influence of her smile made my heart beat with a delightful flutter, the lustrous light of her deep blue eye, flashing through the dark long eyelashes, was to my soul "like gleams of sunshine in a shady place," while the slightest touch of her dimpled hand, sent thrilling emotions through all my nerves, unlike every other earthly feeling. We did not leave the sitting room until the

twilight was far advanced; a minute before Dame Wilson and my mother came from the garden. During the previous hour I seemed to have lived an age, with the charming object of my passionate affections.

My mother and I walked home in silence, for we each had more than enough to occupy our thoughts; and there cannot be a shadow of doubt, but those persons also had, whom we left at that village shop.

I could not help feeling, as we approached the Angle House, that there was a strange magical look about the place, not easy to be understood, so as to apportion the various thoughts and feelings, which it inspired to the shadows hanging about the corners, and to the angles of the building, and the strange looking wall of three feet high, which rose above in the centre of the erection.

Of this wall, which was substantially built and rose from the foundation, being the square of the Taautic cross of the ground plan —it may be here stated that it had four

sculptured devices, of about equal size; one of which was placed exactly in the centre of each side of the wall, which it will be remembered faced the cardinal points of the compass. Facing the east was a Taautic cross, of the same relative proportions as the foundation site of the Angle House. To the south the shape of the stone was an equilateral triangle, with a globe on the apex. Facing the west the device was a globe with a crescent on the top, while an obelisk was placed to the north.

Although I had looked at these symbolical figures hundreds of times, and at the old house in which I was born, yet somehow or other there was a most unusual play of the indefineable lights and shadows of the place such as I had never before observed. More than once I said to my own mind—it is not in the Angle House, but in the love-bewildered soul of Harry Neville. My mother was hanging on my arm, and I thought she walked unusually slow: I was about to ask her what thoughts

weighed so heavily on her mind, as she moved with such a measured step—when she turned half round and said—

"Harry—you walk as if you were tired—what are you thinking about?"

I suddenly stood still and added—"I was about asking you the same question, mother. Now just look at the old Angle House; I was thinking that it looked like the dwelling place of a magician, who lived in the time of the Druids, and who still comes to haunt the scenes of his studies of arts inhibited, and scatter the dark shadows of his spirit over the spot of past enchantments. It has a look of strange mystery to-night, by this light, and with the moon quietly looking over the high trees which surround the Vicarage. How does it appear to you, mother?"

"We look at objects with different eyes Harry," said my mother, calmly and tenderly, "and as your father often observed, they are, what they are to our mental and moral perception. Perhaps you have derived an

influence this evening from your conversation with Jessie Wilson, which quickens, enlarges, and intensifies your whole being, so that some new faculty or the use of some one which has heretofore been dormant has awakened into life, which enables you to perceive old objects in novel aspects. To me, Harry, the old Angle House is consecrated by ten thousand memories, for the most part such as vibrate happily with my soul, for they are memories of past domestic felicity, moving about the life of one of the noblest minded men that ever adorned humanity—a truthful and virtuous man—who never did a mean action, who never countenenced an unjust one, and whose life was one of self-sacrificing devotion to the good of others. The magical influence of your father's spirit or, as I would rather say, the virtuous spirit of his noble life, and exalted departure, seems to hover about the place, whenever I look at it by day, baptised in sunshine, or by night, when it is overshadowed with a stormy sky."

My mother spoke the last words of her sentence with more than her usual animation, so I said, without moving a step forward—"Then you do see, and feel that there is an influence of some kind, as it were, emanating from the corners and antique symbols at the top of the centre wall, and happily that is one which is in harmony with your inward life."

"Just so, Harry," she said, "and I hope it will remain so, until my death, and for your life also; for I believe with your father that there are influences which surround us both for good and evil—(which are not recognized in our philosophies)—and those of the Angle House, from some unknown cause are pre-eminently good. Your father made the study of that house an important object several years of his life."

"And yet," I added, "you have given me to understand, that he could not learn much of the character of the man by whom it was built."

"Just so," she remarked, "he could not learn many things absolutely by direct traditional testimony, and but very little by documentary evidence; but he was able to discover a large number of facts respecting the house itself. He, however, found reason to believe in two or three traits of the character of the man who built the pile, which pretty clearly showed your father what the general character of the man was in his day and generation."

She moved homewards; and I walked by her side, having loosed her arm, for we were not more than fifty yards from the garden gate.

I said how much I should like to hear all my father's opinions about the Angle House and its founder. To my surprise, she tapped my shoulder rather sharply, and said—

That is what I have been waiting to hear for several years."

This remark created more surprise than the tap on the shoulder, and I felt my pulse

quickened thereby, many beats per minute. The fact is, the throbbing of my heart was too great to allow me to speak in reply, so she went on saying—

"It was the wish of your father that I should not tell you certain facts respecting his opinions of the Angle House until you asked for them, and as he thought, and as I still think those opinions are in unison with the influences of the house for good, you may be very sure that I am pleased to hear you make such a request, or to express such a wish which is the same thing. There is a traditionary reason for this conduct which I accepted from your father, and shall require an acceptance from you before you are put into the possession of what you desire to know."

I said, "Your words very much surprise and interest me, mother, and I am anxious to learn if the whole of the account is preserved by tradition or otherwise. I am sure that you and my father were always too wise

and good to do or believe anything from mere caprice; and, therefore, you have had reasons for withholding the knowledge of these things from me until I now asked about them accidentally."

"I have not much belief in what you and people in general call accidents, for every effect has an adequate cause. If, by accident, is meant our ignorance of a cause, let the word stand; if it is meant to signify chance in the proper significance of the word, I protest against it in this case, Harry, most emphatically. This expression of your desire respecting the old Angle House, and your perception this evening of the existence of some mysterious influence hanging about it is as distinctly the result of a prior cause as our individual lives are; and it might be a condition of things at Mrs. Wilson's into which you have entered, which has so influenced your mind as to quicken your faculties into the state to perceive something which never dawned upon your imagi-

nation before. Perhaps you and Jessie Wilson have recognized powers and purposes, passions and principles this evening, which heretofore had a potential existence only. That young gipsy may have been the immediate cause of your asking what you consider an accidental question. Let me tell you that your father committed to writing everything which he learned respecting the Angle House and its construction, and his own opinions also, so that you can read for yourself to-morrow."

I was too sensible that my mother knew what my thoughts and feelings were towards Jessie Wilson, not to see that she fully understood that we had that evening found voice and utterance to passions and affections which had been for a long time cherished in our hearts. I felt no disposition to dispute the cause assumed as likely to have induced my desire respecting our house, while the use of the word 'Gipsy,' as designating my charming Jessie, gave me no small pleasure ; yet,

not unalloyed, for it brought to my thoughts the sudden exclamation of that word, followed by 'the Captain and the Vicar,' when I stood by her side at the piano. It seemed that my mother pronounced the word 'Gipsy' as if she wanted to fix my mind upon it, and she did so, though it is quite probable that there was in my mind the prior condition to secure that effect. She could not know that Jessie had used that word as stated, and I could not imagine that anything had taken place to give particular significance to the word. The why and wherefore of human speculative thoughts is a study which is but very little followed, yet profound moral and mental philosophy sleeps in that arcanum.

The next day the subject was introduced by a letter which I received from Sir Langton Elliott requesting me if possible, to decide forthwith, whether I could with satisfaction to my own judgment and conscience accept his offer of assistance to go to one of the universities, with the intention to

enter holy orders. The concluding part of the letter was as follows—

"I am anxious to render you some service of this kind, and so is Lady Elliott, because we feel that the signal and self-sacrificing services rendered us by your very worthy and highly-esteemed father and mother, in Damascus, have, of late, occupied our minds in a fashion which moves us to do something which we may feel assured in our own minds will be an assurance to you, and especially to your highly-esteemed mother, that we are not insensible to favours long passed, nor to your worthiness as a man.

"As we are about leaving England for some months with an increase of human infirmities, we feel it meet to do what we can in this matter to further your future settlement in life. If we had not the strongest conviction possible of your unswerving integrity, of your truthfulness of character, of your determination to follow your honest conviction, we

should not now point out to you what we purpose in the event of your choosing the Church as your future path. If we did not thus estimate your character, we should not be justified in our own estimation in telling you that the Rectory of Edgecombe, the Incumbent of which is now very aged, will afford you fair scope for your abilities, and a comfortable subsistence."

"We are sure this prospect will not influence your convictions. As we shall leave the Mansion in three or four days, let me hear from you or see you at your earliest convenience.

"Believe me,

"Your sincere friend,

"LANGTON ELLIOTT."

When I had read this letter, which was quite unexpected on my part, so honourable to the writer, and the lady united with him, I placed it open in the hand of my mother. As she read it down very deliberately, I watched

the expression of her serene countenance, but her features underwent no perceivable change, the same calm satisfaction, or benignant smile sat on her lips, and beamed from her slowly moving eyes. When she had read to the close she folded the letter up, and laid it on the table, and left the room without speaking, or even turning her head to look at me. She went up-stairs into her own room, while I stood motionless on the spot beside the table, looking at the folded letter without any desire to take it up to glance at it a second time, expecting that my mother would return in a few minutes. When a quarter of an hour had passed without her return, I began to reflect upon her conduct, likewise about the purport of Sir Langton Elliott's letter, and in a few more minutes, my thoughts had so thoroughly grasped the subject at issue, that I calmly and sternly reviewed my circumstances.

The career of my father was before me like a glorious sun-set full of truth and beauty,

and honour against the outraying splendour of which I could not close my eyes, while my affectionate and pure-minded mother seemed to my soul like the pale crescent moon shining in saintly loveliness, a little higher from the horizon, with less energy, but more ethereal, and I thought I would walk in the same career, with the charming Jessie Wilson to reflect my thoughts, emotions, and character as my mother had, and still did those of my truly reverent father.

Then the Rectory of Edgecombe, with its income of six hundred pounds per annum, floated with hazy deliciousness before my imagination, through which I saw my brother-in-law loom before me like a gaunt spectre gathering round about him, shadowy influences which added to the darkness which masked his movement, amongst which I saw my sister move like a sorrowing woman with a veiled face. The leafy beauty of the Vicarage house looked like a prison, and her sitting room like a cell in which a tyrant held iron sway,

making her childen hold their breath in fear until their young hearts ached with blighted joy and despair of to-morrow.

My reflection returned to the remarks respecting the Old Angle House, made by my affectionate mother, and the sanctity which enshrined it to her soul, and the career of my father, whose name and life were so precious to her, came upon my heart with re-doubled force, bringing with it a firm determination of soul to act in harmony with my moral convictions. I resolved to sacrifice an independent position in respectable society on the altar of principle, and, as I felt myself a Dissenter in matters touching State patronage and authority in religion, to decline the very liberal, and flattering, and tempting offers made by Sir Langton.

In about an hour my mother returned to the sitting-room; I was then in the act of finishing a short letter to the Baronet, which I placed before the eyes of that person who had my interest at heart more than all other

persons put together, and whose approbation I endeavoured to merit in all my actions. She sat down in her own chair and read my letter, as follows—

The Angle House.

DEAR SIR LANGTON,

Your unexpected letter has made me feel more deeply than heretofore the very great kindness of yourself and Lady Elliott towards me and my dear mother, and the tender remembrances which you cherish towards my honoured father. I feel this the more, perhaps, because I resemble him, however feebly the influence of those great principles of truth, which actuated his life, may operate on mine; yet, with his example before me, and my latent convictions respecting Church discipline, I do not feel myself justified in accepting your very liberal and benevolent offers to facilitate my settlement in life. I am fully aware how great a sacrifice I am making, and as you, Sir

Langton, are well acquainted with my surroundments, I am sure that, however I may differ from you in opinion respecting the points of the church ritual, to which I cannot bow, you will appreciate that truthfulness of heart which prompts me to the sacrifice. With my heartfelt thanks for your generosity, and prayers for Lady Elliott's health and yours,

I am, my dear Sir Langton,

Your humble servant,

HARRY NEVILLE.

When my mother had read the letter she leaned back in her chair, and said:

"Harry, my boy, if you always act in the future affairs of life upon the same principles which now actuate your conduct in this matter —whatever difficulties you may have to contend with in the battle of life—you will never lose your self-respect, nor the respect of your mother, nor shall I blush to own you on my death-bed as a worthy son of a worthy sire. I wished not to influence your

determination, and for that reason I left you to your own reflection. In the meantime I have been looking out the document of your father's respecting this house for your perusal this afternoon."

CHAPTER VII.

EBNA EBONAL'S PREDICTION.

It was our custom to dine at one o'clock,—an hour at which my exalted brother-in-law deemed supremely plebeian, and not unfrequently took steps to show it by making unnecessary, if not annoying, morning calls at that hour. He did so that day, but showed more consideration of my feelings, and those of my mother, than when he left our house the last time. He seemed to have forced himself to make some further efforts

to secure the latent purposes of his soul, and so resolved to change his tactics, for he now endeavoured to be good-humoured and facetious. What those purposes were began to dawn upon my mind from several trifling events which transpired, and an incidental remark of my charming Jessie's, had opened a small chink, through which I was able to look at the future of that man. As it happened, we had just finished dinner, and Jane was removing the things, when he came into the room, which he always did without much ceremony, unless he happened to know that some of the Elliotts were paying a friendly call on my mother, when he would be very punctilious. The moment he came in his hawk-eyes caught sight of my letters on the side table and they flashed with a clear but icy light, that too plainly showed to my mother and me that his mind was dwelling upon the purport of what those letters contained. Without any hesitation he said—

"Oh, I see you are corresponding with Sir Langton about this matter, Harry, which is really of vital interest to your future welfare. I hope you will not suffer your mind to be tyrannized over by opinions which will most likely appear in a short time—exceedingly vain and foolish—when it is too late. Who knows but three or four years, or even as many days, may see a change at Edgecombe Rectory, for the old man is very infirm, and, I hear, cannot last much longer. In that case, if you accede to the Baronet's wishes,—and go to Cambridge, it is a point not worth contesting—he would present me with that living, and reserve the Vicarage of Timberton for you, where you would be near to your mother, and comfortably settled for life."

My mother moved to the window and sat down, where she could look into the flower garden and across the Green. Without noticing the words of the Vicar, she quietly asked after the health of Mary and the chil-

dren, but received no reply, for at that moment he went on to say—

"I presume you know that Sir Langton and his Lady will leave the Mansion in three days, and from what I know they may be taking their last farewell of the place, for I find that the physician gives but little hope of her life, for she is far gone in consumption, and his infirmities seem to have tight hold of him. Now is the time, my lad, for you to make yourself for life, and also help to secure the interests of the family. Your mother must be sensible of this, and as it seems your father rendered Sir Langton and Lady Elliott some signal service in Arabia, though how I am at a loss to understand; but no matter, if he is disposed to render us a service in return, it is nothing but right that we should accede to his desire, out of courtesy, to allow, what we may call, dying people to disburthen their gratitude, and show their acknowledgment, to satisfy their consciences before they depart this life."

My mother looked at William Rushworth with her steady manner and unchanged benignity of expression, but did not speak; so I remarked, "I feel sure that if I satisfy myself in this matter, I shall also satisfy Sir Langton, and ——"

He added—"And perhaps you will satisfy nobody else and be dissatisfied with yourself before long—when it is, as I said before, too late."

I rejoined, "If acting according to the honest dictates of my conscience, by which alone one can be self-supported in the affairs of life, gives dissatisfaction to others, that is not my fault but theirs, and will, in my humble opinion, suggest that their purposes were not exactly square, like the central basement of the Angle House." The cold glare of his eyes glanced at the letters again, then at me, as if in doubt what course to pursue, then at my mother, whose quiet manner seemed always to provoke him, for he had not the grace to feel chastised by her silent rebuke. As she looked over the Green,

her eyes caught sight of a gentleman whose name has been mentioned already, though he has not personally appeared to the reader. It was George Willifer Elliott. Without moving in her chair, she said, "Harry, the young Ensign is coming over the Green, I should not be surprised if he is coming to bid us farewell, for I have heard he will leave to join his regiment to-morrow. Yes,—and the Captain is, I see, following behind."

"There again, just let me tell you, that if I had not used my influence with that chance son of the Captain, he would have gone into holy orders; and, of course, he would have had the living of Edgecombe—and it would have been all up with your preferment, if not with mine. That old Hulk, with all his rant and banter about the 'black dragoons,' would have been pleased to have seen him rector of that place. The Ensign spent the evening at the Vicarage, being the last but one before he leaves, and my niece, Amy, and he beat us several games at whist with cheat-

ing, and chatter, and after supper they were singing and playing until past midnight. Let me once for all tell you both that you have really no right as members of the family to blight by a vain pride all the fair prospect of our gaining a better position in society. Ah, I hear the noisy Captain, so I must conclude by saying that I trust this letter lying here does not require a reconsideration."

"Not a bit of it," I said hastily and firmly. The Vicar twitched his nose up and cried "humph."

A moment after, Captain Leo and Mr. Willifer Elliott were announced by Jane, and walked into the room. My mother rose up to shake hands with them, the Captain taking the lead. After a general greeting, in which the Captain was much less boisterous, they sat down, and the conversation became somewhat sprightly. The young Ensign was a man above the common size, not exactly handsome, but passable both as respects face and figure, with very polished

manners, and evidently a generous nature. Well read in the literature of the age for one who was living a gay military life, he was pleased with my mother, and delighted to hear her talk. He made polite inquiries after Mrs. Rushworth, and the fascinating Amy. The Captian said, good humouredly:

"I am afraid, Mrs. Neville, your son-in-law does not keep good hours at the Vicarage, for this lad of mine was there till past midnight, keeping up their revelry of cards, and profane song singing till the clock struck, I do not know how small."

The Vicar gave a dry laugh, for he never liked to hear himself called son-in-law, beside he wished to conciliate the good opinion of the Ensign, and the Captain also, for a reason which had lately dawned on the Nevilles.

The Ensign observed:

"You perceive, Mrs. Neville, the life of a soldier is here to-day, and gone to-morrow, so that when one meets with friends and fascinating company, and knows that the next day

at dawn perhaps may call one away, it may be for years, the heart of a man is apt to linger on and on till—Duty calls, and then—"

The Captain burst in, "up and at 'em, like a true Briton! that's the mettle for an English soldier or a British Jack Tar. Ay, Mrs. Neville, self-consecration to duty, whether on land or water, church or dissent, no difference to the true-hearted. Not a bit of it, Harry Neville, never forget that, George my boy; what say you, Vicar?"

Thus appealed to, he answered on the spur of the moment, for he could do so with considerable ability; "Quite right, Captain Leo, you take a broad view of most questions, and strike at the vital point into the bargain. Your sea-faring life has perhaps given you this directness of aim, or as I might word it, concentration of purpose."

This was certainly a true view of his character, but it was not any proof of keenness of discernment in the Vicar, for no person could be with that sea captain without

soon feeling that that was a most prominent feature of his nature. The captain said, "Well done for once. I am glad you know that I know how to strike at the vital point. It is for this reason that I give Harry Neville such good advice—ay—you are as good as a witch, Mr. Rushworth, in diving into my character. It is just the same thing as the old gipsy told me yesterday—ah, ah, a—Mrs. Neville, will you believe it, I allowed my fortune to be told last night, and purchased a secret for half-a-crown that would be worth a mint of money if true—ah, ah, no fool like the old fool; but you see I have no faith—no faith."

My mother betrayed more surprise than I ever before saw in her; and the words of Jessie Wilson rushed again into my mind. "The Gipsy, the Captain, no, the Vicar." I could not understand why that ever serene face should be momentarily agitated by a mere use of the word gipsy. But my mother was sitting with the window open, and she could

look across the garden; and she saw that gipsy, of whom the Captain was speaking, coming through the gate and making towards the window, for she had caught my mother's eye. She then said:

"Upon my word, Captain, your friend, the Gipsy, is this moment coming across the garden to this window. Does she know you are here?"

This, in some measure, accounted for my mother's surprise; but it increased my own, for the three persons, mentioned so unexpectedly and instinctively by Jessie Wilson, were about to meet in my presence. I felt sure there was some fact connected with the Gipsy of which I was in ignorance, and the probability was that it was well known to my mother.

The Captain instantly moved to look out of the window, at which moment the gipsy reached the front of it, and curtsied to my mother as he called out—

"You good-for-nothing baggage, what, are

you come to get silver out of this lady as you did of me yesterday!—ah, ah, by telling a bit of truth and a heap of lies."

"An please your honour," she whined out, "the lady sitting there knows more of her own fortune than your humble sarvant does of your honour's, and that's saying mickle truth; but it's the young officer I am after seeing, who owns your honour for a daddie, and loves a pretty maid with a loving name. I can see from the knuckle of his left hand there on the chair back that his mither died when he was a babby without teeth."

"I'll lay the shirt on my back to the clippings of your long thumb-nail, and the dirt under it, that you can't tell me his 'mither's' ehristian name?" said the Captain.

"An please your honour, honourable women of my calling never lay wagers—chating gentlefolks out of the sil'er in their purses, and the shirts off their backs. Your honour is a true gentleman sailor, and would pay if you lost, and in this case you would

have to 'go a wom ' wee-out ony linen on your back to hide the nakedness of your bosom. Natheless the pretty body niver had any name but her maiden one, and that was Chrysacoma Willifer, as your honour knows."

"The very devil is in you, woman," cried the Captain, in astonishment.

"Not so, your honour, it is the good spirit of the gipsy race that tells me the truth—as your honour knows."

There was a pause. The Vicar was standing in the corner completely hidden from the Gipsy as well as myself, and neither of us moved or spoke, from different motives. My mother said, "You see how easy it is to lose a foolish wager when you have to do with dishonest people. I believe the gipsies know more about the nobility of England than is notified in the last book of the peerage."

"The lady spakes unco-truth," said the wrinkle-fingered Gipsy, for she was the same person who had been the day before telling fortunes at the shop of Dame Wilson. "And

a' uncogood house-roof is o'er her head, and her husband died in honour and rests in peace. I glimmer the slip of his strength will walk in his wake to the joy of your lady's heart, any how; but will the son of Chrysacoma Willifer cross his palm wee a bit of sil'er for the help of a poor body, and hearing of the things in store for him as true as he will leave Timberton at the dawning of to-morrow's day?"

The person thus addressed had no desire to take a peep at the future, so he said rather sharply, as he took a shilling from his purse and threw it out of the open window—"There's a bit of 'sil'er' for you to hold your tongue, and buy some gin and tobacco—if there is any good fortune in the future, for me it will be more delightful; and quite as well to come unlooked for. 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof'—what say you, Mr. Rushworth?"

"True, true, Mr. Ensign Elliott, that's how every true gentleman thinks and feels—really,

Captain Leo, you should not encourage a lot of gipsy vagabonds in the neighbourhood. I dare be sworn that this fortune-telling cheat ought to be sent to prison, if all the truth were told and she had her deserts; though I dare say Mrs. Neville very much pities her."

As the Vicar was speaking, he moved to look at the object of his remark, with an expression of concentrated severity.

The Gipsy showed that she was not one bit abashed by his look, but that she could return him an expression equally severe, and immeasurably more pregnant, with contempt and scorn. In a moment she exclaimed, without the least whine in her voice:

"If your reverence—God save the mark—had all you deserve, and nothing but what you deserve, somebody else would be the Vicar of Timberton, and William Rushworth would have a darker cell in prison than that which even-handed justice could award to Ebonal; the good lady has more cause to pity the Vicar than the Gipsy;—God bless her heart! if

she does not spend all her pity over the sorrows of her daughter whose name means bitterness. Out upon you, the day shall come when the Vicarage shall fall prostrate to the Angle House, and Ebna Ebonal shall laugh at the acid tears of your icy eyes, ah, ah, ah."

The gipsy went hastily away twisting her wrinkled finger round and round up and down in the air in a spiral line.

"There," said the Vicar, "you see Captain Leo, the kind of women which you have patronized, she is as spiteful as a tiger and vindictive as a cockatrice. The Ensign showed good sense in not listening to what she had to say and—"

"His father, folly in listening to her prognostications, that's a legitimate and logical deduction," hastily rejoined the Captain.

The Vicar looked annoyed, but said with an attempt at badinage —"What a man you are, Captain; you always come in with your great gun to settle a point with a bang. I

should not be surprised if your patronage of Ebna Ebonal cost you a good shirt, and a fat sheep into the bargain; before you are a fortnight older."

The Vicar took up his hat to depart, when the Ensign said, "I shall do myself the pleasure of calling upon you this evening, to bid you farewell, and Miss Amy; by no means forgetting Mrs. Rushworth. At the present, we have a few matters to settle with Mrs. Neville and Harry—and then—a call at the old shop, to look at the village shopkeeper."

"And have a little fun with Dame Wilson's empty-headed vanity—ay?" the Vicar added, "Oh fie! you naughty young fellow, that poor flirt will go beside herself and fancy you are in love with her, and mistake her impudence for cleverness—and her conceit for superiority—good morning, gentlemen, good morning."

"A very pretty morning conceit," said Captain Leo, "spoken at two o'clock—

twenty-nine minutes p.m., Greenwich time by my Graham's chronometer. Have you any idea what that Gipsy meant, Mrs. Neville, by her remark that the Vicarage shall bow to the Angle-House?"

"None whatever," answered my mother.

CHAPTER VIII.

DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS OF DARK SAYINGS.

When George Willifer had taken his leave of my mother, and Captain Leo and he were gone to bid Dame Wilson and her niece farewell, we sat in silence for some time. My mother placidly looking out of the window at the flower garden, alternately thinking of the several persons just departed—I said after some minutes' silence, "Your mind seems pre-occupied beyond the objects at which you are looking, mother."

Without any hesitation she began, as if the weight of her thoughts oppressed her spirit—

"I am thinking about many things, Harry. In the first place I must tell you that the character and conduct of the Vicar very much displeases me, and though I do not want to influence your mind against him, yet I do think that what I have heretofore thought was the sadness of spirit incident to a certain state of religious experience in your sister, I am now satisfied arises from a cause altogether different. It is one growing out of the conduct of her husband towards her, and perhaps towards others also. I make no doubt you will have to feel the influence of his disappointment in this matter, which is really very important to you. I am satisfied with your conduct, but it may cross his purposes in some way, so altogether unsuspected by us, that the results may exasperate him. I trust you will avoid all cause of strife."

"I shall do so," I said, "but you know

that when any ill-disposed person, especially in a family, is determined to carry his point at any cost, it is not always possible to prevent a collision—very often it is not wise to avoid it, lest a worse condition is induced by the domination engendered. I certainly mean to avoid every cause of strife, and I shall not come into any conflict with him unless not doing so involves the sacrifice of a principle —or—" I hesitated, and my mother said,

"Or what, Harry?"

"Or directly interferes with my rights as a man to choose my own friends, and follow my purposes of life."

"It will be exactly in those matters that he will take the liberty to interfere, which will be therefore the more vexatious to you, because it is therein that he ought not. Besides, I have some fear that the affairs of life may not present themselves as pleasantly as you anticipate, so that when you are irritated by disappointment, and the other passions incident to your age

and condition, you may commit yourself before you are aware of it. You may be tricked into strife and contention by your better feelings; and believe me, Harry, it is possible to be led into mischief by your better nature, and in a way cheated into crime by your very virtue."

There was so much tenderness and anxiety in her manner, that I could not for a moment believe that she wanted me to change my purpose respecting the offer of Sir Langton, the reply to which was still lying on the side-board. I felt sure that she had some especial thought or circumstance, or probable event in her mind, or she would not have said that my virtue might cheat me into crime. I was satisfied that if such ever took place, it would be through my being goaded into passion and temporary madness by some act which touched the vital part of my life purposes. I felt sure that the icy, bitter, and calculating spirit of my brother-in-law was equal to that, though I could not see how it

was possible to occur. The result of my reflection ended in saying, "The remark of the Gipsy that 'the Vicarage shall bow to the Angle House' is altogether a mystery to me, mother, and you are also in the dark respecting the same matter. Have you heard what the Gipsy said at the shop, for it seems she has been down there?"

"Her words were 'fall prostrate' not bow to the Angle-House. I have not the least idea what she meant to convey, and as for what took place when she was at the shop, I only heard what was related by Jessie, at the tea-table. It is not my practice to heed the sayings of fortune-tellers."

"Nor is it mine, mother; and yet sometimes the words pointedly uttered cling to our minds in despite of ourselves. It has been so from earliest records, as history plainly shows, and here you see the exact words of this Ebna Ebonal are clearly chronicled in your memory, and are now in mine.

Do you think it will be easy for you or for me to erase them ?"

"I must confess that it is in part owing to their singularity, more than the probability or importance of the truth intended to be communicated."

I said, "'That is it, mother; the singularity is based upon the individuality of the case. Here the Gipsy said, 'the Vicarage shall fall prostrate to the Angle House.' You see, I have the words correctly lodged in my memory; and I am sure that she said something equally singular, and therefore personal, to Jessie Wilson, for I am now convinced of a fact, the particulars of which I do not know, and should be exceedingly glad to learn."

"Of what nature," asked my mother, more with a show of indifference than really so. I then related the circumstance which took place while Jessie was trying the new piece of music, when she involuntarily said, "The Gipsy—the Captain—the Vicar," and added,

"I should like very much to learn what singular words the Gipsy said to her which so fixed themselves in her mind, and not the less so from the uniting of three characters so very dissimilar." My mother looked thoughtfully at me, as if she were either measuring the strength of my capacity to bear what she could relate, or calculating in her own mind whether she should or should not make some important disclosure. After rising from her chair, and looking out of the window, she turned towards me, saying—

"I think I am able to say why Jessie used those names in the way you mention, for all three had been just before engaged in conversation with her upon very different topics, and each of them calculated to make a strong impression upon her mind. Her aunt was desirous to hear from her a relation of what had been said, so Jessie gave us the leading particulars at tea time, shortly after which you came in while the three persons mentioned were fresh in her memory."

Here I observed Jessie Wilson would not be much impressed with what the Vicar could say about confirmation.

"She might be by his way and manner of speaking," my mother observed, hastily; "and indeed they had, it seems, some sharp conversation, which was interrupted by the entrance of the Captain."

"What did the Captain say?"

"Oh, nothing in particular, beyond talking in his usual good-humoured way, and offering to lay foolish wagers with Jessie of the most incongruous character. It is a singular practice with him, which Mrs. Wilson says Jessie endeavours to out-do in extravagance."

I asked what the nature of Jessie's fortune might be as sketched by Ebna Ebonal, to which I could get no direct reply, my mother saying that it seemed to be of the same general character as all others under the circumstances, and at best a guess at probabilities, as thus—your husband will be faithful and true, and you will have five children, which,

of course, are general assumptions more or less likely to be the truth."

I remarked, "From the Gipsy's manner here, I should have thought she would have said something as pointedly to her as she did just now. Did she not, mother?"

I asked the question in earnest, and she replied distinctly, looking at my eyes most tenderly, yet keenly—

"The Gipsy certainly told Jessie that her first-born son would be a nobleman."

Despite of myself, I felt an instinctive jerking in my eye, and though but slight it was sufficient to enable those which were looking at me to see that an unpleasant thought had flashed into my mind. She went on to say again what has already been recorded in substance, viz.—

"You see, Harry, that Ebna Ebonal is an adept in this equivocal way of speaking; for every son who is a worthy son is, from the nature of things, a noble-man: and there are other ways by which the

words may become true, so that the after fashion will be to interpret her words this way or that, as it happens."

"Yes, yes, I know it is, mother," said I, "but the question really is, which way did the Gipsy mean, or, a more vital point, which way did the words fashion themselves in Jessie's mind?"

"I cannot answer that, perhaps she could not herself with all her acuteness."

"I doubt it, mother, for I incline to think it is much easier to discover that, than it will be how the words of the Gipsy will fashion themselves in our minds that 'the Vicarage shall fall prostrate to the Angle House.'"

A pause of considerable length followed, during which my mother took up some plain sewing, while I involuntarily turned over the leaves of a book, when she added musingly—

"It does seem easier, Harry, but I am utterly at a loss to discover anything which can give significance in the case of the Vicarage *versus*

the Angle House, and I do seem to see how the other may form itself into a fixed idea in her mind. It was for this reason that I said some time ago, that the events and circumstances of life may not transpire in the way you may anticipate, under the influence of which you may possibly act rashly, and consequently, unwisely. I mistake the workings of your mind, Harry, if you have not already said to yourself after this fashion, 'I don't see that it is necessary as a matter of mere courtesy that Mr. Willifer Elliott should call at the shop to bid them farewell, especially accompanied by his father, who therefore gives countenance to the step.' I thus give voice to your thoughts, if not the very words which have already passed through your mind; and I do so, Harry, to make it at once apparent to you that you are further gone in love than you have given me to understand, though it may be, probably is, distinctly known to Jessie Wilson. I do not for a moment think that the Ensign will be a serious rival to you; yet

it is quite likely that Jessie may have admitted in her soul an idea which may very materially trouble her life for a season, and yours also, against which I wish to forearm you. I think the words of the Gipsy have more of cunning than knowledge in both cases, not that I disbelieve in the absolute sense that human events are not at times foreshadowed, or foretold by unexpected words from people in a certain state of excitement. There are some few very remarkable facts connected with this Angle House, which were foretold, and came to pass, and there is one of a singular nature recorded in one of the documents respecting the future. You shall read and judge for yourself before long. Tell me, Harry, has Jessie Wilson given you to understand that she reciprocates your affection?"

My mother had led me with her most completely, for she spoke like one who not only understood my heart, but human nature in general. I felt that she was giving utterance

to my thoughts, nor did the question with which she closed her remarks at all surprise me. I gave her an answer in the affirmative, assuring her I was perfectly satisfied with Jessie's conduct, as she had given me the other evening a distinct assurance of her love, more than enough to banish from my mind all idea of a rival in Ensign Willifer Elliott; yet, somehow or other I could not help feeling a sort of mental reservation, as I said this, for my mother's way of talking of the matter led me to think that she knew some fact which I did not, and which I connected by a freak of the imagination with Jessie's manner when she, involuntarily gave utterance to the 'Gipsy—the Captain—the Vicar.' The reference to the facts relating to our House, however, poured another train of ideas into my mind, and I asked to look at the collection of particulars made by my father respecting the Angle House. My mother replied—

"Harry, I thought this morning that I would place the manuscript in your hands to-day,

but I have had strange admonitions not to do so for a short season."

I had far too much love and reverence for her to endeavour to dissuade her from her purpose by any entreaties growing out of impatient curiosity, so I simply observed, "Whenever you think proper."

At this juncture, my sister and her eldest child came in, the latter, a bright-eyed pale-faced girl of some five summers, at which moment I was in the act of taking up the letter which I had written to Sir Langton. I went out to send the servant with it to the Mansion, and my sister caught a sight of the address as I did so. When I returned to the room they were talking of the matter, and my mother had given Mary the particulars which she had heard only from the Vicar, who had coloured every fact, word, and event, with the hues of his peculiar mental and moral vision, which gave a most untruthtful complexion to the whole. My sister highly approved of the steps which I

had taken, without making any comment upon the opinions of her husband. I left them to talk together, and began to amuse my little niece, who very speedily found out how to repay the compliment by amusing me with interest, for she was a character in miniature. She had a peculiar way of catching up words of much import, and of substituting others which had the look of being synonymous, but which gave a very different idea to those who listened. My sister said—

"The Vicar will be very angry with Harry when he learns the result, and we all shall have to suffer in consequence," when the child turned to look at her grandmamma and say, "Yes, grandma, we shall all be made to cry in consequence, and papa says he shall bleed uncle Harry for ever."

"No, no," rejoined her mother, 'not bleed, but cut uncle Harry,' that's what he said, child; you should not talk in that way."

"Yes, ma, papa said cut him for ever; so

he can't cut uncle Harry without making him bleed, can he, uncle?"

"Not very well, my dear," I said to her, "unless he leaves off when he has cut my hair; for you know that all your curly locks might be cut off without making you bleed."

I thought that moment of the words of the Gipsy. My sister had unbosomed herself to one who knew how to sympathise with human misery and mental affliction; it is therefore no wonder that she knew how to take hold of her daughter's spirit, and learn all the sorrows which wrung it in secret. When she had been disabused of the idea that my sister's gloom and grief of soul did not spring from the workings of grace upon her heart, she very quickly discovered that there was but one other cause which could produce the results which she had long observed in her daughter. The late conduct of her husband had very much contributed to this discovery. The long pent up spirit of

my sister having been touched and opened by the magical influence of motherly sympathy and love, poured out its suffering and sorrow in a manner deeply affecting.

My sister was a most tender-hearted and uncomplaining woman, for it should be observed that more than two years had passed since the change in her tone of voice and expression of face had been distinctly remarked by my mother ; and the truth is that two years before that had been passed under a weight of woe which cannot be summed up in a laconic form of words. The nature of her sorrows will in a degree become apparent by taking into consideration the character of her husband.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RED-FRECKLED FINGER GLOVED.

It is not an easy task to fully describe the domestic manifestations of character and habitual behaviour of the Vicar of Timberton, for strangely contradictory qualities were united in him. He was severely religious—if scrupulosity in exacting obedience to all the fixed forms of his code constituted that virtue,—while at the same time he was neither pious nor good in thought, word, or deed. He had an obsequious seeming sanctity

before his superiors in station, with a corresponding bitterness and acidity of spirit towards all whom he considered his inferiors, and to none was this acrid feeling more distinctly and frequently shown than to his wife and family. He exacted the most rigid obedience to his commands and wishes from all about him, and required that they should assiduously administer to the gratification of his selfish and unfeeling nature, while he had no kind of consideration whatever for the rights or comforts of others. He was cruel in nature, and as covetous as cruel—as ambitious as Lucifer, and many degrees more servile. "He was a tyrant to the weak, and a coward to the strong," for which reason his wife was treated like a bond-slave; yet he fawned before the Baronet and his Bishop, and other great men, like a mongrel cur. He hated dissenters, yet he married the daughter of a dissenting preacher; but he had no love for churchmen, or anybody, for that element seemed foreign to his composition, unless a

diseased feeling which showed itself in nursing and pampering a bull-terrier, meantime keeping his children at arms length, aided by the snappish temper of the brute, can be called by that name. Perhaps there never were two men more strikingly contrasted than he and my other brother-in-law, who was a poor curate, working hard, yet cheerfully, and conscientiously, in a populous and poor part of a large manufacturing town in the centre of the kingdom.

Jerome Givington had no rabid feelings about forms of worship, but he loved to do good to his fellow men, endeavouring earnestly to teach them the way to be happy, not only in the world beyond the grave, but the world this side of it. His heart was full of kindness and his spirit with the higher aims of life, and the humanities beamed from his open brow and intelligent eyes like the benevolent rays of the rising sun. At present I have no more to say of the poor Curate who married my sister Sarah, but he will have

to appear hereafter when the hues of life have changed their relations and the relations their hues.

My sister and her little girl spent the evening at the Angle House, for my mother was very much concerned about Mary's unhappy condition, and as I could not give her advice at all comparable to the affectionate being, whom we equally loved, and who loved her children with a calm and noble nature, I thought it best to leave them to converse together, so I took my little niece for a walk.

No sooner were we on the Green than I propounded a question for the exercise of her intellect, but I am afraid her young appetite influenced her judgment. I said, now tell me truly which way had we better go; by the mill and the garden of the Mansion, and so back home, or by the Rookery and Dame Wilson's shop? Without any hesitation she said—

"O, uncle, I'll go the way you like best,

for I like the barley sugar bottles in Dame Wilson's shop, more than I dislike the ducks in Sir Langton's pool. I like Jessie, too, uncle, don't you like her, uncle. My papa says Dame Wilson and Jessie make together a chapter of pomp and vanity that's why I like them, uncle, for one always gives me figs when I go there of an errand, and the other gives me white sugar candy."

It is hardly necessary to say that my steps turned towards the Rookery, which is the same as saying towards the shop, and perhaps with no higher development of reason, *cæteris paribus*, than that exercised by the child. As I turned round I asked, "Do you like sugar-candy?"

"Yes, uncle," she said, laughing, "as dearly as you love Jessie Wilson, who gives me some, sometimes."

I did not fish for that form of reply, but it clearly informed me that her parents were well aware that my affections were placed

pretty close to "the chapter of pomp and vanity," as the Vicar designated the aunt and niece.

In a few minutes we found ourselves before the counter of the shop, and Dame Wilson behind it. I gave the child sixpence, and left her to make a selection of sweets while I had a stroll in the garden, for I saw Jessie there busy with her flowers. I was close behind her before she knew of my presence in the garden. She was softly singing to herself "the Soldier's Tear," which, I must confess, changed the current of thoughts which was running through my mind when I entered there.

That current in consequence became a little turbid. I said, with as much unconcern as I could muster, "Jessie, dear, you can tie up your pinks and sing your love ditties at the same time, and think of what you dare not utter into the bargain."

My voice startled her more than usual, under such circumstances, and as she turned round rising up, for she was stooping, I caught

her shoulders and kissed her forehead. She said, "How funny, I was that moment thinking of you, Harry."

I reproached myself for the stray thought which had a momentary existence in my mind, and tenderly added:

"It will give me much delight, Jessie, to learn what you were thinking respecting me, for, in truth, I have more than enough of sorrowful thoughts respecting myself; yet I do not mind hearing your thoughts of me, though they may be of the same nature, for I can find solacement from whatever you may think of me, however disparaging and just.

The charming girl gave a keen glance into my eyes, and, with her womanly instinct, at once read the kind of mental and moral ordeal that I had lately passed through. She said—

"I was just thinking, if I were a man like you, I would not be a parson if I were sure of having the livings of Timberton and Edgecombe—one in my right hand pocket and the other in my left."

The beautiful hues of her face grew brighter as she spoke, or my vision was considerably intensified: while a sense of satisfaction rose in my soul at the reply which I had sent to Sir Langton Elliott. Her eyes flashed for a moment, when she added—

"I will bet you the skin of my red-freckled finger to the fore leg of the first fly you can catch on the north wall of the Angle House, that I can tell you one thing that you have done since I saw you last—beyond the usual routine of life!"

"Did the knowing Lady Ebna Ebonal tell you as much?" I asked, "or did you obtain your conviction by your own reflection? Do you suppose I have decided to go to Oxford?"

"Just as much as I have decided to go to the moon to be confirmed—in my belief, that it is not a green cheese made of chalk," she said with a jocular air, though there was a tone of pathos in her voice which touched my heart. I asked her tenderly if she held her

red-freckled finger in higher estimation than either of the others?

"I confess," she answered, "that I plead guilty to that weakness. If you ask me why, as I see from your lips you want to, I shall say, 'not because of the red freckles altogether, but yet because of them on that finger.'"

She held out her hand, which was covered with her garden glove, so that I could not see which was the red-freckled one—she stretched them out so equally that I could not tell to which she referred, and I had not previously observed that one of them was so distinguished. I said—

"Which finger, Jessie, do you mean: for I cannot see through your glove? Allow me to take off your garden gauntlet, and discover this red-freckled peculiarity."

I caught hold of her wrist, and was in the act of ungloving her little hand, when she suddenly closed her fingers, and said—

"There now—let it remain a little time while you tell me why your hand trembles? and

why it is so burning hot this evening? Have you any superstition about such trifles?"

I still held her wrist with one hand, and had my fingers ready to remove the glove as I replied—

"I feel rather feverish to-day: for I did not rest much last night; and I am not able to touch your hand without trembling, Jessie. When I do so, my nerves seem to quiver. I am not superstitious in a general sense, yet I know, I feel, that there is something very extraordinary in you which quickens the beating of my heart, not only when I touch you, or am near you, but whenever my thoughts dwell upon you, which is very often! This you must know, Jessie Wilson, quite as well as I do. Perhaps this red-freckled finger of yours is the symbol of this power in you. There is a tradition connected with the destiny of the Angle House, which—but open your hand, my love, and let me take off your glove. I feel a little anxious."

"I find you do," she said, "and not a little

excited also, and quite as superstitious as your friend Ebna Ebonal—"

"My friend!" I exclaimed; but she went on without noticing the interruption.

"Who goes about the country telling fortunes, chastising wickedness in high places, and flattering poor girls with hope of something delightful in the future? For she says that those who have poverty and difficulties for their daily companions ought to have the light of hope to cheer them in the future! She is very learned in family secrets. I ask you, in your style—Did the knowing Lady Ebna Ebonal impart to you the tradition respecting or connected with the Angle House? or did you discover it by your skill in multiplying the quaint symbols of your Angle House by the hieroglyphical device over the front door?"

I looked at her, and said—"Jessie!"

She replied, "Harry!"

After a moment's pause, she went on to say—

"There are two ways by which you can open my hand. They are both in your power; but one of them you will not use—it is by force. The other is by telling me the particular tradition to which you have referred. I do not ask from whom you learned it, and I shall relax my grasp of nothing as you proceed. I do not blush to acknowledge that I am very superstitious about some things, like Captain Leo, who often boasts of having made me believe in ghosts! He offered to-day to lay his gold repeater chronometer and seals to one of my left eyelashes that he could make me believe he was the Wandering Jew, if he could talk to me in a thunderstorm in the 'Chops of the Channel!' You see, Harry Neville, that you have the magical power to open my clenched fist at will. That may be as important as believing in a myth. Now then, what say you?"

I again said—"Jessie!"

And she repeated—"Harry!"

There was an unmistakeable sign of sadness

in my voice and look as I spoke her sweet name, which she instinctively copied. I felt that she loved me. I felt also that, that was no proof our loves would end in happiness; and the remembrance of the tradition of the Angle House, which had been recorded by one of its proprietors, came over me like unexpected winter thunder, and shook my soul to its centre. I hesitated about the propriety of telling her the particulars which she seemed suddenly desirous, if not determined, to learn; because that tradition had been always considered as the future storm which would overshadow with fearful darkness, if it did not utterly destroy, the Angle House. There was no future fact intimated—no hope of revival—no redemption prognosticated. The tradition in question was the last ray of intelligence vouchsafed respecting that symbolical house of which I was the only male heir.

The thoughts which created my hesitation, insensibly made me relax my grasp, which Jessie felt in an instant, and said—

"I feel that if you loose my wrist, without telling me what I ask, we shall never understand each other again, Harry. I do not say this to induce you to speak out, for I feel that I do not care to know, I would rather not know, but for the fear, and sorrow—yes—fear and sorrow, which might fall upon both if you do not now tell me."

"This is very painful to me, Jessie. It takes hold of me like a mortal agony, I am sure it will be a cause of sorrow. I fear it may pour an unexpected element into the chalice of our lives."

"It must be now, however painful; speak, Harry Neville, like a man, and Jessie Wilson will listen like a true woman, and act like one toward—toward—everybody."

"In which form of words, Harry Neville is included?" I added, with inquiring firmness.

"He is as principal," she replied quickly.

Without a moment's delay, I said, slowly if not calmly, "that recorded tradition saith 'A

lady with a blood spotted ring-finger, shall convulse the Angle House."

Jessie instantly pulled off her glove, and held up before me her "red-freckled finger;" it was the third on her left hand. She said eagerly, "The man who marries this finger, will be 'faithful and true,' saith Ebna Ebonal. I will stake my life to the sweet-bread of a butterfly, that you misunderstand the tradition, and Captain Leo Elliott, shall be judge—there, loose my hand, how dare you kiss a blood-spotted ring finger. Let us go into the house, I want to see your sunny-eyed niece."

We went instantly, Jessie full run, and I followed, thinking of many things.

CHAPTER X.

THE VIAL OF THE VICAR—THE COWARD'S CASTLE.

ONE object which I had in view, in leading my little niece to Dame Wilson's shop, was to learn, as by accident, the general character of what took place, when the Ensign called to bid the folks there farewell, but a trifling circumstance led to a different and unexpected result. I learnt shortly after, from an interested party, that during the whole time he had been at Timberton, Captain Leo had used his best arguments to induce his son to pay

attentions to Jessie Wilson, for he thought so highly of her personal character, general conduct, and natural abilities, that he would have been pleased to see her become the wife of his son Willifer, even though a future day might see him in possession of the family estates, and titles. He did not then know that I had given my heart's devotion to that charming girl with a fervour and zeal which left no doubt of my earnestness of purpose. If he had, he could not for a moment have pursued such a course, as it would have been violence against his open-hearted truthfulness, and generous nature, and gentlemanly character. That the gay young soldier liked to talk soft nothings to her, and listen to her bouyant mirthfulness of nature, is beyond doubt, and he felt often much glee in hearing his father and Jessie vie with each other in laying or offering to lay extraordinary wagers, and observe Dame Wilson, with most stately demeanour, chide the Captain for talking so extravagantly about small matters

to her niece. She did sometimes scratch the middle of her left palm, with the forefinger of her right hand, and wish him at Jerusalem: yet upon the whole he was a very great favourite of Dame Wilson's, and not less so was she esteemed by the open-hearted Captain. So great indeed was his attachment towards the stately Dame, that a rumour once agitated the village of Timberton, to the effect that the Captain had actually made her an offer; whether this had any foundation in fact, has yet to appear.

Respecting the Ensign, I learned that he had conversed with Jessie in the garden for the space of half an hour or more, while the Captain was sitting in the shop talking to her aunt. Beyond this fact, I of course could learn nothing beside what Jessie herself felt disposed to communicate unsolicited. I had supposed that her musings prompted her to sing the song of the "Soldier's Tear," without apparent design, and I think so still, for I know that human beings are turned to this or

that by motives so subtle that they are often not conscious of their existence. That her heart was dwelling upon him more than upon me at the time I spoke to her in the flower-garden I do not believe,—but that she had afterwards a considerable conflict in her mind I know upon the authority of my mother, who had it from her bosom friend, Dame Wilson. Nor is this a matter of wonder, considering the personal character of George Willifer Elliott and his position and prospects. This will be more clearly perceived when the conduct of Captain Leo is taken into consideration, and that he looked with complacency upon the chance of Jessie becoming his son's wife.

I found, but not without great uneasiness of mind, that the Ensign had asked Jessie's permission to write to her, and that she had not said what I think she ought to have said —'no.' While this gave a gloomy hue to my musings and speculations about the future, it was some comfort to learn that she had

distinctly told him that she should not reply to his letters. If I had not had the most abiding conviction of the truthfulness of her word this statement would have been considered a mere flourish of words. It is quite probable that the dashing young Ensign estimated them in this manner.

Persistence in writing to a lady who never deigns to reply, is a virtue which can live only in a soul where love as a passion and a principle of the purest character has taken its seat. Whether such had found a sanctuary in the heart of the Ensign, of course, was beyond the sphere of my observation. I was then deeply convinced, and I am now, that for a man to be persistent in his love of a woman who cannot be induced to give him the consolation of a reply to his letters, is exceedingly rare; so rare, in fact, that not one man in a thousand ever did or ever will show that it is possible. Still, the home of the Ensign was at Timberton, and he would be frequently there, or might and could be, at

least, while his regiment was in England. 'He is certain to be,' I said to myself, 'if he loves Jessie Wilson half as much as I do—and that, too, while I shall be at my lonely studies at Hackney College.' These and other considerations made my reflections of the saddest character, and gave an expression of fixed melancholy to my countenance, which my mother was not slow to observe. She was not slow to arrive at a perception of the true cause.

It was no small consolation to me that I had made a distinct declaration of my love, and had received a somewhat flattering assurance that I held the fee-simple of Jessie's heart. Notwithstanding this I was agitated with inward pain, and began really to reproach myself for having unwittingly put her in possession of the dark-featured tradition of "The Angle House," especially as the red-freckled ring finger of her hand seemed to give strength to the notion that she had a connection therewith.

Three days of this kind of musing and self-conflict seemed an age, but they brought the Sabbath with all its sense of sanctity and rest. It did not create any surprise in my mind, though it gave me a very great deal of pleasure that my thoughtful mother had, without my knowledge, made arrangements for Dame Wilson and Jessie to dine with us, and spend the day at the Angle House. When I learned this at the breakfast table I own that the objects before me became suddenly hazy through the moisture in my eyes, but how much of that effect was due to my love for my mother and admiration of her wisdom, and my love of the younger Wilson, would not be easy to apportion. Perhaps the forces were about equally balanced.

Here I must remark that the Vicar had, in addition to his other doubtful virtues a disposition to preach at his parishioners rather than to them; and, in the exercise of this propensity or acquisition, he took especial delight in handling the opinions and character

of his immediate friends and acquaintances when they said anything in private life which crossed his pleasures. It is therefore no wonder that he exhibited his particular feelings and passions against Dame Wilson and Jessie the "pomp and vanity" of his own creation. I especially had my conduct freely handled by him in the "Coward's Castle."

This Sunday morning in question, he had fully charged the vial of his indignation against the persons mentioned and my unoffending mother likewise. The great cause was, he had discovered on the Saturday, from a conversation with Sir Langton, the result of my deliberations respecting his offers of patronage in the event of my going to college.

After my father's death and William Rushworth, the vicar, had married my sister Mary, my mother regularly attended church every Sunday morning, and I went with her. It will be remembered that she was a clergyman's

daughter, and had been brought up as such; but when she married my father, an Independent minister, she conformed to his feelings, like a discreet woman. It was not singular that, after a happy life of twenty years or nearly, she grew attached to Dissenters' form of worship. Perhaps the two were equally inviting. Hence she as regularly went to chapel in the evening. She scarcely ever failed in this matter. Dame Wilson was very conscientiously devoted to the church service; and from the time she entered Timberton on the Saturday, nineteen years before, she had not missed that number of times going to church twice each Sunday. As her character was without a blemish, and as she had uniformly endeavoured, to the best of her ability and means, to promote not only the interests of the place generally, but the church congregation in particular, the behaviour of the Vicar towards her was the more remarkable and senseless, if not characterised by qualities disgraceful to him as a man.

The cause of his prejudice against the stately dame shopkeeper, I could never satisfactorily discover; but it seemed to have been produced by the mystery of her coming to live at Timberton and her lady-like deportment, which he chose to consider unbecoming a person who was obliged to keep a shop for a living. He was then Curate. If she had assumed that demeanour to him, and the Elliotts, and a few of the "topping folks," as those in a certain position are called in that district, there would have been show of reason in his prejudice; but the fact is, Dame Wilson never put on any airs to suit an occasion or person, and she was as perfectly polite and stately towards the poorest labouring man or his wife, who went into her shop for half-an-ounce of tobacco, or a quartern of soap, as she was to Sir Langton or Lady Elliott. I believe she never gave precedence to either of those personages in serving them while another person, however poor and however trifling in amount the

purchase was which such came to make, without permission being first ceded by such person.

The gentlefolks at the mansion were too well bred and too sensible to feel uneasy at such politeness. Indeed, it was the chief cause of their early appreciation and patronage of the unconnected maiden lady shopkeeper.

The opposite feeling was engendered in the mind of the Vicar: for his native acidity of soul, united to his sense of self-consequence, could not tolerate being so treated by a shopkeeper parishioner. To make the matter complete, a short time after the advent of Dame Wilson, a little slip of a child was brought one evening to live with her—nobody knew why or from whence. The Vicar concluded that the child was illegitimate, and that her mother had been something somewhere else, and was now come to be shopkeeper at Timberton. He did not disguise his opinions in this respect when talking to the "topping folks" of the parish, and frequently took

opportunities of annoying Dame Wilson by calling the child her daughter, instead of niece, as if by accident. After two or three times correcting the Vicar in this point, Dame Wilson saw clearly that he did it by design; and she, in a few dignified words, once and for ever, deigned to notice his conduct in this respect. She said—

"Mr. Rushworth, I beg leave to remind you once again, and for the last time, that I have corrected you in this matter three or four times so distinctly that it would be an insult to suppose you incapable of understanding me. It is no less one for you to persist in your insinuations upon groundless suspicion. I deem it unworthy of you as a gentleman, and disgraceful in you as the Curate of Timberton!"

The Vicar had prepared his chastisement for our offences of omission and commission according to his peculiar idea of their enormity, from the text of Jeremiah, chap. 10, ver. 8—"They are altogether brutish and foolish:

the stock is a doctrine of vanities." But he had neglected to ensure a condition very desirable for his purpose by presuming on antecedent practices: for it so happened that neither of the four persons whose imputed offences gave him so much clerical displeasure went to church that Sunday morning. My mother knew that he was aware of my determination, and she expected some intemperate manifestation, beside which she felt highly displeased by his behaviour of late, and especially indignant at his manner of treating her daughter, for which reason she refrained from going to church.

Early in the morning, she had put into my hand the manuscript-book, written by my father, about the Angle House, and the person who designed and built it, together with the traditions respecting both which he could collect. The whole formed a very curious piece of Timberton history. I became so much interested in the matter that I could not lay the work down to go to listen

to the acrid platitude which I had the greatest reason to think the Vicar would hurl at my head. I was certain that my refusing to enter holy orders crossed some deep design of his, though I could not then discover it.

The cause why neither Dame Wilson nor Jessie went to church arose out of the fact that they had received, late on the Saturday night, a very important letter from the post-town by the carrier, so that they were in a state of too great anxiety to get ready time enough for church; in addition to which they were a little flurried by being engaged to dine at the Angle House. This last feeling arose by reason of what had taken place between Jessie and the Ensign at his farewell visit. They did not go to church that morning, nor that day, but about two o'clock they came, according to arrangement, to dine with us.

Our absence did not prevent the Vicar from gratifying his own feelings, if he did not edify his congregation: for he delivered his sermon with due emphasis, and, while wonder-

ing what on earth had kept four constant morning worshippers from church, and all as far from the truth, as the *animus* of his discourse was alien to the genius of Christianity.

He, nevertheless, consoled himself with the conviction that all the vital points and trenchant denunciations against those who were "altogether brutish and foolish" would be in due time known at the proper places, and that his salient arguments—if not altogether of high logical coherence—would be repeated with additions at the house where the "stock was a doctrine of vanities."

Our very absence, perhaps, aided his oratorical flourishes, and more especially helped to fix the minds of the congregation upon us as the objects of his zealous, if not righteous, displeasure. They could not understand what it all meant any more than they knew why we all happened to be absent. The thing looked like an understood matter between the village shopkeeper, the folks at the Angle House, and the reverend Vicar. The only

persons who fully comprehended the matter sat in the great pew. Sir Langton and Lady Elliott were somewhat amazed, yet grieved, that the Vicar should have allowed so much personal and bitter feeling to get the upper hand of his judgment.

Captain Leo, after shuffling about in his seat, became too uneasy to sit any longer, to hear such an unjust and dead-set preaching at the most exemplary ladies in the place, so took up his hat and quietly left the sanctuary!

At that minute the Vicar seems to have become conscious that he had overstepped the bounds of propriety, for he prematurely arrived at the formal conclusion, "And now to," &c. Many and various were the opinions of the people of Timberton that sun-shining Sabbath morning, and they were freely uttered after service, but by no means in justification of the preacher or condemnation of the excellent women and young folks assailed. These facts I, of course, learned at a subsequent period.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TOP OF THE ANGLE HOUSE.

My mind had been strangely exercised by the perusal of the history of the Angle House so that the time passed more rapidly than I suspected, and it was not until the antique horologe struck one, that I became conscious that the morning was gone; that in about an hour the being, whose life and actions were so important to me, would be under our roof. My heart rebounded with its natural impulses; and I felt a fluttering within

of no ordinary kind. It was the first time those two persons had been invited to dinner, for though our intercourse had been free and frequent, yet no formal dinner invitation had been given before by either party. The high appreciation which my mother had for Dame Wilson has been already stated; and it may be here observed that she respected the character of her niece as highly.

In a short time I made myself ready to receive our esteemed friend, Mrs. Wilson, and salute one who had given me most endearing tokens of her love and affection. I may say, and with truth, that I had loved her for years without daring to tell her so by words, albeit every act, movement, and look of mine spoke the sentiments of my spirit too distinctly for her, or any woman, to misunderstand.

Although Jessie had been often at the Angle House, and, when a young girl, three or four times a week, occasionally as many times daily, yet this was the first time since she had felt the sentiment which

now thrilled our hearts. That had been certainly two years. In that time I had made many changes in the decorations of the rooms, and strange passages, and more particularly in the centre of the house, and the top room which I had fitted up as my study, and made convenient arrangements on the outside walls, (which had the ancient symbols) for astronomical observations, a science which deeply interested me.

A few minutes before two o'clock they came and their coming was an event in our lives, which neither I nor Jessie, from one point of view, and my mother and her aunt from another, will be likely to forget. After they had taken off their light summer habiliments, and while the dinner table was being set, my mother was engaged in confidential conversation with Dame Wilson, while I in a tumult of delicious emotion, took Jessie to look at my study and take a stolen glance at Timberton, and the surrounding country, from the top of the Angle House. I am sure that

her heart was in as wild a flutter as my own.

The position commanded a full view of the Mansion, and all the pleasure grounds, the whole of the park, and the greater portion of the wood which surrounded the north and east side of it, and the hazy hills beyond. As she gazed with eyes full of flashing delight, her bosom heaving with her joyous respirations, I felt such happiness that I did not know how to contain myself, so that big tears of rapture filled my eyes. Partly to conceal them, I turned and looked over the landscape. She caught a sight of my tears as they fell from my eyelashes, when she laid her little dimpled hand, and round pearly-hued arm, on my shoulder and said—

"Oh, Harry—what a beautiful prospect, how sweet everything looks in the world: is not the Mansion a lovely place, but—"

She paused a moment, and I said, "but what, Jessie?"

"Tell me why you are weeping," she added,

putting her other hand up to clasp its sister hand, the arm of which rested on my bosom. "Tell me why you weep—what trouble you?"

I said, "Oh, never mind, my darling; it was only a stray thought or two, which, uninvited, crossed my mind. It is of no consequence; there, you see the tears are dried up by the warmth of the sun, or by the light of your eyes, Jessie; look yonder, can you see the Captain at the bottom of the lawn smoking his pipe?"

"Harry Neville, I asked you why you wept;" she spoke tenderly without removing her clasped hands from my shoulder. "Believe me your tears trouble me, and I am sure that will be enough to convince you that I want to know why you wept. Has your heart secrets which you wish to keep from me?"

I put my arm gently round her waist, and turned and looked into her dark blue eyes which beamed with a deeper hue from the shadow of her parasol of that colour which I held

over her head. "If I could lay my bosom open to your inspection I would do so joyfully, my sweet Jessie," I replied, "for I have not any secrets in the world that I wish to withhold from you, unless it should be such as would cause you sorrow, so I kept them from you for that reason. Perhaps the present are of this nature, so let it pass."

"For that reason I am anxious to know. Is not that like wilfulness? tell me, nevertheless, why you are sorrowful to tears?"

"You desire it then?"

She replied, "I do."

"I do not know how to account for such thoughts at such rapturous moments as these, my Jessie, but I thought if all and everything which we can see from this spot were mine, I could lay them down at your feet and deem it no sacrifice."

She rejoined, when I paused—

"But that is not all, or why did you shed tears? Was it because you had not the power to give so much to the village shop-keeper's

orphan niece? who is already happy enough to stand here and lean on your shoulder for support. No, Harry Neville, your tears did not flow from that reflection!"

I replied—"True, a question was suggested which my tears seemed to answer."

"Ah—ah, that's it, Harry Neville: ask your question and I shall discover all by my own sharpness."

"Jessie—Jessie, I thought that I should like to ask you, if the Mansion and estates of Timberton before us could purchase your love?" She took her parasol from my hand and lowered it over her face, leaving my forehead quite outside its border, so that she could see my eyes and lips, in the full blaze of sunshine, and, still keeping one hand on my shoulder, said—

"That depends on the character of the purchaser, and, until you have clearly stated that vital point in such a hypothetical question, how is it possible for the poor witless orphan girl beside you to answer! Ay, ay, I see

your fountain of tears is again disposed to give out its distillation. Your tears, I see, were caused by a sense of jealous fear or rapturous triumph at your idea of my answer, or it might be a mixture of both emotions."

A considerable pause followed. I knew that my eyes were growing humid, and if I attempted that moment to speak, my lips would quiver, so reveal more of my agitation than I desired. I continued to look over the landscape.

"You feel that I am correct in following my mere instinctive thoughts. They assure me that I know the main reason why your eyes again grow misty. You will, perhaps, say that I have been taught to tell fortunes by Ebna Ebonal."

I was about to look her in the face, but I felt a heavier pressure on my shoulder, which instantly corrected the turn of my thoughts; and this increasing with a slight tremulousness, thrilled my very soul. I ventured to say—

"You have had a better teacher than Ebna Ebonal."

"Oh, yes!" she said hurriedly; "Harry Neville."

"No, no!" I as hastily rejoined. "I mean your own nature—your own instinctive thoughts—as you well express that element of your inward life."

"And that tells me that you have been thinking while I have been prattling; that I must be not only an unfeeling girl, but cruel enough to—to—"

Her voice suddenly failed her, and I felt the pressure of her arm increase, and her swelling bosom against my shoulder. She added, as her head fell on my arm—

"To make sport with your tears, you can now—now—be revenged in laughing at mine!"

I do not clearly know what passed the next few seconds. I had some idea of having kissed the tears from her glowing cheeks with ineffable sensation. It was a delectable

moment. The first distinct words that I heard were from those lips, which seemed to have left their ruby sweetness on mine, though if my life depended upon swearing to that fact I should have to die without perjury.

"If all the world were mine, I feel that I should not be happy without you, Harry Neville! If yonder mansion and the estate of the Elliotts, were mine, I could not find it in my heart to offer them to purchase your love! But I could lay them at your feet joyously, because of that love. There—there—now be content! Let us go down. Mind, you don't provoke me to jump over the parapet before I have had my dinner!"

"We shall have no feasting like this to-day, my charming Jessie. I must have one more kiss before we go down!"

"Then you will send me back to the village shop hungry and thirsty, for I am both now. I hope you will be kinder to my aunt. I am sure your dear mother will be in that respect.

Look yonder! I do believe Captain Leo is looking at us from the lawn with his spy-glass. I shall be ashamed to look at him to-morrow."

I adjusted a small telescope to look at the Captain, more to please her than anything else, meanwhile saying—

"Then it seems you have an appointment with him to-morrow?"

"Not a bit of it," she said; "but I should be disappointed if I did not see him to-morrow: for he comes in most days once, morning or evening, and of late he has been a more frequent visitor."

"You seem of late to have had a growing delight in his company. There, Jessie, he is clearly smoking his cigar—no, his short pipe, and looking this way. Take a view of the noble-hearted man before he moves."

She instantly knelt down on one knee, and brought her flashing blue eye to the point of sight, while I held the parasol over her beautiful head.

She exclaimed—"That's it, sure enough. He looks as if he could see us clearly—as plainly as I can see him. One has to reflect before one is convinced it is not so."

"True, Jessie; very true. Reflection of a certain kind can bring distant objects near to us. What do you think of Captain Leo, from your present point of view?"

Without a moment's hesitation, she replied with a peculiar dancing intonation of voice, which she could give it as if by magic—

"Think of him! Why, I incline to think that if he were to offer me all the mansion and estates of Timberton to love him, he would soon rejoice in a knowledge of my acceptance of his offer!"

The azure light of her eye cast a furtive glance at my face as she rose up from the telescope. She continued—

"Though he might soon find that he had made a foolish offer: I will tell you why, and save you the trouble of asking. Because he had gained that love before I was a pupil of

Harry Neville's! Is that your dinner-bell ringing?"

"It is, Jessie Wilson. I am glad you think so highly of the Captain. If I were dying, I should like to know that you were about to become that great-hearted man's wife!"

We were descending the stairs when she added with eagerness—

"God bless him! I hope he has as good an appetite for dinner as I have for the roasted lamb and mint sauce, which send their aroma up here so delightfully refreshing. I had a long conversation with him last week about the history of this queer old Angle House of yours. He says it was originally built by one of his ancestors, who had the credit of being a magician. It seems that you have some traditional facts or fables, in which you more than half believe, Harry—ay? How good the dinner sends out its inviting odours the nearer we approach. I do believe I can distinguish the scent of green

peas! I should like to hear all about this very curiously-constructed house. Can you tell me more about——the tradition of the 'Blood-spotted Ring-finger?' I cannot think what influence it is which makes me keep continually prattling about nothing, or next to nothing, when I ought in courtesy to be listening to you. I begin to think that this Angle House—. There now! What a lot of triangles are cut in that stone over the door into your study! What do they all mean? I do begin to think—as I was about to say before I saw those angles, which changed the order of my thoughts for a moment—that my red-freckled third finger has more significance than I have heretofore suspected. I will wager the skin of this red freckled finger —the red freckles are in the skin, I believe, not in the flesh below, but it cannot be proven, I think, without skinning the finger, and if I lose, that point can be settled—I will lay the skin of my red-freckled finger to the sensation

in your little finger when you hit the tingling bone at your elbow, that you cannot tell me the true cause why my dear aunt—"

We were at the bottom of the staircase; and my mother, who was conducting the said aunt into the dining-room, said—

"No scandal about Queen Elizabeth."

Whether the proverbial injunction was instinctively suggested by her suddenly hearing the voice of Jessie, or by the really queenly movement of Dame Wilson, I do not feel able to decide; but the effect was such that we all suddenly stood still, facing each other.

Dame Wilson said—"And what foolish wager are you offering to lay with Harry Neville about your aunt? Remember, Jessie, that every generation gets wiser, as the wiseacres say; hence you may find younger heads than the Captain's more than a match for you. Let us, however, hear your offer respecting your aunt. But I suppose it is some trifling matter. Mrs. Neville, I won't keep you standing."

We moved towards the dinner-table, and Jessie repeated—

"Oh, I was just offering to wager the skin of my 'red-freckled ring finger' to the sensation in his little finger when he hits the tingling bone of his elbow, that he could not tell me why, at uncertain times, you scratch the palm of your left hand with the forefinger of your right?"

As Dame Wilson turned round at that instant, she was, actually performing that operation; while, at the mentioning of "red freckled ring finger," my mother gave a sudden halt, and glanced at me.

"You hear what a trifling matter is made the subject of a ridiculous wager, Mrs. Neville. This is a foolish custom which Jessie has picked up from the Captain."

"No indeed, aunt," said Jessie, "it is not a trifling matter. There is but one thing in this world that I would sooner know than that which causes you to do so: for I have often observed that there is something inexpressibly

sweet in the expression of your eyes after you have thus scratched your left palm with your right hand forefinger! Look there now, Mrs. Neville; cannot you see what I mean, Harry?"

There was no denying the fact; and both of us testified to it as we sat down to dinner, during which I more than twice or thrice observed my mother look at the third finger of Jessie Wilson's left hand.

CHAPTER XII.

RUSHWORTH'S WRATH REBUKED.

After the evening service, which usually closed about four o'clock, it was the custom of the Vicar and my sister, and one or both of their children, to call at the Angle House before they returned home; and as we had not been to church, we expected they would do so that day.

My mother felt anxious to see Mary; and yet she also felt uneasy at the prospect of what might take place from coming in

contact with the Vicar, if he said anything particularly unjust and bitter to me. Putting this and that together, she thought he would be kept a little in bounds by the presence of two persons, and those women and visitors.

When the dinner was over, our conversation turned upon the personal character of my sister Sara's husband, Jerome Givington, who was a man of estimable qualities of heart and understanding—a curate of self-denying devotion to the duties of his divine function—a kind husband and father, whose affections flowed in one continuous stream, calm and benignant. In that point of view he resembled my mother. Dame Wilson had never been in his company; and though he had at different times spent the Sabbath at Timberton, he always declined to preach for the Vicar, but never assigned any reason beyond this, that he thought it best not. These visits were spent chiefly in my mother's company. This did not fail to give a degree of

umbrage to William Rushworth. The contrast between the two clergymen who had married my sisters failed not to strike our visitors, and Dame Wilson could not refrain from saying that she wished they could change places.

My mother had given her friend to understand that the Vicar's behaviour was most likely more disagreeable in private life than even she suspected, though she had been made to feel his cruelty of nature in his remarks about the maternity of Jessie. Just as we expected, so it happened, for he made it his business to call with my sister, but the children were sent home. As they were coming through the flower garden gate, Dame Wilson made a stray remark, which seemed purely accidental, but which arrested our attention. It was this:

"He cannot be worse than his father."

Neither of us had the least idea that she knew anything about his family. It was a fact that *we* did not know much. A moment

after he came into the room in his hasty, rude, and unceremonious manner. He glanced round a moment and said.

"Oh I see you have been feasting and following the instincts of your carnal nature in preference to attending church—to your religious duties. I suppose this is the beginning —the first fruits of Mr. Harry Neville's dissenting instruction. I suppose you have been holding a little Bethel meeting, and are now refreshing yourselves with a little fruit and wine, ah! ah! ah!, your pew, Dame Wilson, looked to day as guiltless of pomp and vanity as it has any Lord's day these ten years past."

"And no doubt you feel comforted by a knowledge of that fact," she replied, "judging from the harmony of your practice with your preaching."

"It don't become you, Dame Wilson, to make insinuations against your Vicar," he retorted.

She added; "Very true—very true, I have done wrong, I find, as I generally do when I

follow your example in such matters. There is neither pomp nor vanity in my pew when we are not there, for there are no cushion seats nor gilt prayer books."

"And when you are there—there is 'no pride that apes humility,'" the Vicar retorted, again, so bitterly, that my mother said calmly

"I am afraid, William Rushworth, that you are using a two-edged sword indiscreetly, for I am sure your judgment is in this matter blinded by your temper. Really, you ought to have some respect for the feelings of my visitors, if you have none for the mistress of this house and the grandmother of your children."

"Oh, to be sure I ought, you always talk wisely; and Mrs. Rushworth has a keen faculty of imitation, and I tell her sometimes that you will never die while she lives. I know I ought to learn at the Angle House how to administer pastoral reproof to those who neglect to go to church when they have health and strength and the gracious opportunity. I am sure Dame Wilson is too true

a church-woman not to admit that I have a right, sanctioned by divine authority, to give reproof when and where I think proper. I believe she will not be ensnared by the crafty zeal, without knowledge, of ranting dissenters, and I trust she will not allow her pretty niece to be led away by anybody's misrepresentation of what is and what is not her duty."

"I shall not allow that myself sir," replied Jessie, "and it was for this very reason that I decided not to be confirmed to-morrow at Edgecombe."

"Therein you did wrong clearly, for that is a case in which I, as Vicar of Timberton, know better what your duty is than you can pretend to know, unless you have already sacrificed your understanding to the opinions of your classical tutor. In that case, of course, you accept your own conceits, as more important than the knowledge and wisdom of your superiors in the church."

I said the opinions of her classical tutor would lead her to listen to the dictates of her

conscience, rather than the dogmatism of any man, however great a scholar he might be in his own estimation, or good christian divine in the estimation of others, and in both cases "the tree is best known by its fruits." He turned and looked at my mother, when I began to speak—as if to show his contempt of what I had to say. Mary was saying something in a low voice to her, which did not reach his ear, so he looked at her frowningly, and remarked—"What choice bit of scandal are you women now chewing together? why do you not speak out, so that your friends on this side of the table can hear and be edified by your wisdom."

During this portion of our conversation, William Rushworth had helped himself to two or three glasses of wine, and all the time kept picking the choice fruit on the table, for his especial gratification; however carnal that feeling might be in others, he seemed to be oblivious that it was so in himself. Nor had he any courtesy towards

those whom he considered his inferiors in station. His wife said, "I am only telling my mother about the state of Lady Elliott's health; you should not be so suspicious about what is going on if it does not happen to reach your ears. I have no patience with you, Mr. Rushworth."

"The greater disgrace to you, Madam," he remarked. "I know you have not, therefore it is my duty to teach it to you with more severity than heretofore, for it is a christian virtue, pre-eminently belonging to women, and which I am sorry to say is not much appreciated."

He then turned quickly in his chair, and addressed Dame Wilson thus—

"I suppose that you have been made aware of the fact that the genius of Timberton, and all the Nevilles has shown his wisdom in rejecting the splendid and generous offer of Sir Langton Elliott, disappointing him in his best designs and noblest purposes, and blast-

ing the higher interests of friends by his sectarian conceits."

She replied, "Your supposition, sir, is incorrect, for I have not been informed of such particulars."

"Perhaps there has been some especial reason for concealing them from you; but such is the fact, and I do not hesitate to say, that it is not only a gross insult to the Elliotts, but to every one connected with the family of the Nevilles, and, in a measure, to all who are likely to become connected with the same. I do not fear to tell you, Mr. Harry Neville, that you have acted like a fool, and that a sound horse-whipping for your perversity would be the legitimate chastisement."

To this I was constrained to say in reply, "Neither do I fear to tell you that your sentiments are less christian than your language is classical, and that is not saying much for either. It is also an untruth to say that I have by my reply insulted Sir Langton Elliott,

or his Lady, or the Captain, and you know it, William Rushworth."

He said savagely, "You had better say I am a liar!"

At this, my mother rose up and came between us. Looking him full in the face, she said—

"I am astonished at your behaviour, William Rushworth. You are using such language that I cannot and will not allow in my house, such as I never before heard in the presence of respectable women, from a clergyman or any christian minister. You have this day committed an offence which I fear you have not the grace to cancel by atonement. Go home and reflect upon your conduct and repent, and at least learn to behave with common propriety in other people's houses."

"Oh, to be sure," he rejoined; "I know you can talk in that fine strain from June to January, and endeavour to justify your clever son in all his absurdities, dignifying his drivelling conceits, and covering his delinquencies by

conscientious clamour. Let me tell you that you are not that very knowing lady which you suppose yourself. Your son has grossly deceived both me and Sir Langton, and he has craft enough to deceive you."

"He has neither deceived you, nor Sir Langton, and you know it. You may have deceived yourself, nothing more likely," said my mother.

"Did you suppose I was about to give him a little corporal chastisment, that you came to stand betwixt us? You seem to have a correct idea of his deserts."

Here I again spoke, and said—"Perhaps you can remember what Ebna Ebonal said the other day, that 'if you had your deserts somebody else would be Vicar of Timberton.'"

"Ah, ah, a!" he chuckled, for it was not a laugh, and then said—

"I know you like to quote from congenial authorities. 'Birds of a feather'—you have the sense to know the rest; you and that thieving vagabond have much congeniality

of nature, I make no doubt. All gipsies are dissenters, or heathens or infidels—"

At this instant there was a tapping at the door, and Captain Leo was announced; but the Vicar was sitting with his back to the door, and talking so loudly that he could hear nothing but the sound of his crackling voice, for it was of that character when he was angry. Hence he went on after the Captain entered the room—

"All gipsies are dissenters, or heathens, or infidels, and none but fools, silly girls, and interested scamps pay any attention to their—their—ah! Captain, I did not hear you come in—"

"No, no—I find you did not—but you saw me go out this morning, for you made your ship too hot for me by firing your guns at these unarmed vessels; I call that dastardly work—the work of a coward. I beg your pardon, ladies, but my life has been spent in defending the right, and, with your permission, Mrs. Neville, I will take the com-

mand of this ship of yours, and tell the Vicar here that I am ready to do battle with him though he were Commodore of fifty ships of the Church militant."

"Bravo! bravo!" said the Vicar, in a subdued voice; "that's the true mettle of a sea-captain; I always admire your pluck—but, I presume you do not allow dictation to you when standing on your quarter-deck, still less mutiny in the forecastle—ay?"

The Captain replied quickly, but collectedly—

"The cases are not parallel, for those who manned your ship were a congregation of amateurs, who were at sea for their own pleasure, and could leave at will. You may at that place fire your pop-guns, stuffed full of your malignant pellets, at my head from your 'Coward's Castle,' as long as you please, and I shan't strike sail, but laugh at your pitiful spite; but you shall not shoot your malevolent darts at the innocent and absent with impunity, while I can

protest by my silent contempt, and am able and willing to fight a fair battle for fair women with you here, or anywhere, on open blue water. It was dastardly, Mr. Vicar—it was flat rebellion against the divine authority of your commission—it was foul mutiny against our great Commandant, by virtue of whose spirit you are recognized as a commissioned officer in Timberton. I tell you seriously, my fine fellow, that if you had your deserts you would find, as the woman said against whom you were fulminating when I came in—Ebna Ebonal—'that somebody else would be Vicar of Timberton.'"

During all this the Captain stood at the opposite side of the table to the Vicar, with the tips of his right hand fingers resting on it, and his left hand lightly resting on his bosom—while the rest of us looked one upon another. The agony of my sister was terrible, my mother's but a little less so, though she held more perfect command of herself. Dame Wilson sat in the same dignified

position in her chair, her features rather more than usually fixed, yet flushed, gazing stedfastly at the Vicar, and unconsciously scratching the palm of her left hand with the fore-finger of her right. I felt an indescribable mixture of human passions, of joy and sorrow, of delight and regret, blended with indignation and agony. Meanwhile the deep blue eyes of Jessie were rivetted on the face of the Captain, as if she would devour his words faster than they flowed from his lips—looking as if she were as ready to obey his commands as a true-hearted jack-tar is to board an enemy, when commanded, through blood and fire and fury. Her little dimpled hand grasped her closed fan as if it were a cutlass, while her eyes had that clear, bright, steady, penetrating look, which bespoke dauntless courage. She had the same look when she closed her gloved hand in the garden, until I had told her the purport of the last tradition respecting the Angle House. This was the second time only that I had

observed it. Her mind seemed as calm and collected as Captain Leo's, and as dignified as her aunt's. More than once I saw the quick grey eye of the Captain glance at her with the keenness of a practised commander.

At the close of his words the Vicar rose up, having previously intimated to his wife by his looks at her and the door, for her to leave the room. As she did so, he said beginning with his dry ah—ah, a—which was more husky than usual, and nearer akin this time to a cough than a laugh, a burlesque of both—"Ah! ah! ah, it's refreshing to see you Captain Leo, in your old age, so up to the mark in gallantry, it is indeed; but you were always first-rate in fighting their battle, I see—I see, the great secret of your popularity with the softer sex, now creeps out. Indeed, Captain, you are still as heroical as ever. I fear you did not clearly catch the thread of my discourse, of my argument, this morning, and so from some pardonable cause missed the aim and end of my spiritual and pastoral admoni-

tions. I must leave you to settle the matter as you please, it is enough for me that I have conscientiously discharged my duty. Good morning, Captain Leo, you are too eager, too hot,—and so bent on fighting for the softer sex, that I must wish you good morning."

"As a parting word," said the Captain, "I must tell you that your conduct is contemptible, though I know all reproof falls on your head like a whip of gossamer on a donkey's hide, and nothing can reach your soul but through the breeches pocket, so, let me tell you, that mine are buttoned up."

In a minute after, the Vicar crossed the front garden with hasty strides, and my sister followed him to endure more agony than she can ever disclose. The Captain turned towards my mother and said, "Perhaps I have to beg your pardon, Mrs. Neville, for taking the liberty of defending you and your friends—I may also say my friends—in your house as I have; but, what I heard at church this morning, and, discovered

by a glance when I came in, that you had been insulted in your own home I could not refrain from making an attempt to chastise the Vicar's insolence."

My mother said no apology was required, that we had to be thankful he came in as he had brought a very painful state of things to a close, and that she had to deplore the condition which created it, the character of Mr. Rushworth being altogether rude, ungentlemanly, and unreasonable.

CHAPTER XIII.

VITAL SPARK—THE FAREWELL—THE WAGER LOST AND WON.

BEFORE the Vicar had gone three steps from the front gate, the open landau, and pair of fine grey horses of Sir Langton, came up with the Baronet and Lady Elliott, and I saw my brother-in-law take off his hat and bow very obsequiously, and pass onward. It was a matter of no small surprise to him as I afterwards discovered, what business, what motive could have taken them in the carriage

to the Angle House. He felt annoyed from all points of view, from none more than from the reflection that such a call had never been made at the Vicarage.

He began to think he had committed himself a little, for he was too much blinded by his own venom to see that he had done so very much indeed: committed himself in relation to Captain Leo, I mean, for he had no kind of trouble about his behaviour to the rest of us, for I am sure in that he rather triumphed.

When the carriage stopped at the gate, the Captain hastily remarked—"My friends, let us be cheerful and keep a knowledge of this contention from the Baronet and his Lady, who are come to pay you a parting visit, Mrs. Neville, for they leave the Mansion to-morrow for the continent."

Although Dame Wilson and Jessie had often conversed with Lady Elliott about the general affairs of the village, it had been for the most part across the counter, or occasion-

ally walking from church. They had never by any chance met before in a private room.

The stately demeanour of Dame Wilson had been often the subject of conversation at the Mansion, as may be easily perceived from the character of the Captain and his frequent visits to the shop. Although Lady Elliott was fully aware that she had been brought up differently, she really had underrated her graceful carriage and elegant manners. When the Captain talked of her, they used to banter him about being blinded by Cupid!

My mother and I met them at the hall door, and, in doing so, she informed them of the presence of Mrs. Wilson, her niece and the Captain, and asked them into another room; but Lady Elliott signified her desire to see our friends also, as their call was one of a friendly nature, not of a kind requiring private conversation.

I fell into the rear, and followed a step behind, by the side of Sir Langton, as my

mother did by the side of his lady, so that I had a fair opportunity to observe what passed.

When Dame Wilson rose from her seat and Jessie a little beyond her, she did so in a fashion so queenly, so perfectly lady-like in her movements, to meet Lady Elliott—Jessie following her example, not imitating it—that their influence was felt immediately.

I thought I could discover a slight movement of surprise in both Lady Elliott and Sir Langton. The Captain said in his joyous way, a little significantly—

"You see you have caught me talking to two ladies here besides Mrs. Neville; and one of them was just ready to play us a bit of psalmody on the piano. I should like Lady Elliott to hear you, Jessie! I beg your pardon, Miss Wilson I ought to say."

"I am pleased to find you so pleasantly engaged, Captain. I beg you will be seated, Mrs. Wilson. I shall indeed be pleased to hear your niece play a few tunes; and the

Captain has informed me that you sing very sweetly, Miss Wilson. I beg you will favour us."

"I am afraid the good nature of Captain Leo has given me credit for more than I deserve. It is I who shall be favoured by your listening to my humble performance."

I must confess that I felt a thrill of delight at that moment indescribable. Everything in the room looked as if the sanctity of the Sabbath were intensified by the golden light of the afternoon sun. I knew that our visitors delighted in music. Lady Elliott was especially fond of some of the old sacred melodies, which I knew Jessie could play with admirable taste, and sing with tenderness and feeling. Captain Leo could sing a good bass, I had some ability with the flute, and Dame Wilson knew part singing, while my mother could support Jessie in the air.

Jessie sat down to the instrument, and the Captain stood at her right hand to turn over the music, and make selection. We arranged

ourselves, while the Baronet and his Lady sat on the sofa near the window, in a position which commanded a full view of us all. The Captain acted as conductor.

The style of playing and singing was of a kind which at once went to the very souls of those for whose especial pleasure we were exerting ourselves. Their appreciation was altogether flattering, and Lady Elliott was moved to tears. We continued singing for about an hour, when the Captain said—

"Now for the finale!"

He placed before Jessie the divine music and words of "Vital spark of Heavenly flame," which she played and sang with unusual depth of emotion and skill. Sir Langton was moved to tears of devotion, while his lady rested her elbow on the sofa, and buried her face in her handkerchief, vainly trying to suppress her emotions and holy aspirations.

The sound of the piano ceased to vibrate, but, before a word was spoken, Jessie

silently glided out of the room without the notice of her noble audience. When they looked up, her seat was vacant. Her aunt walked back to her chair with unaltered gracefulness; and the Captain, as he shuffled the pieces of music together, wiped his brow, but his handkerchief seemed bent upon pressing against his eyes, as he said—

"Ah, me! I once heard 'Vital spark' sung in a wonderful manner amongst a congregation of *darkies* in Jamaica."

"Was it sung by darkies?" I asked.

"No, no, Harry," he replied. "It was sung by a little white Christian Methodist, whose soul is now one of the angels of God."

Dame Wilson looked at him steadfastly, and again, as by instinct, scratched the palm of her left hand with the forefinger of her right; while Sir Langton and Lady Elliott expressed their pleasure, appreciation and surprise at the high style of Jessie's performance.

"Pray, Mrs. Wilson, who taught your niece

to sing and play so admirably, if the question is not a rude one?" asked the lady.

"Not at all so, madam," she replied. "My niece has been taught only by her natural taste and practice, and the instructions of Mr. Neville; and now and then a few corrections and suggestions from Captain Leo."

Sir Langton observed—"The young lady certainly has great musical talents. Most likely her parents were musical: for such qualities seem to be hereditary."

"Her mother was a very beautiful singer," said the aunt.

"Let me see—yes—I understand correctly that she is an orphan—your sister's—no, your brother's child, of course," Sir Langton said, half-abstractedly, when his lady said—"Well, really, it is no difference. Miss Wilson is a beautiful performer. Where is she run to? Ah, I see. She has been wisely taught by you, Mrs. Wilson, not to be greedy of praise, and display her ability for the sake

of vain compliments. I am sure she must be a great comfort to you. God grant that she may be long found all that you desire her to be."

"I thank you, madam, for your kind observations; and I am happy to say that Jessie is all that I can wish her to be. If she has any fault, it is one which the Captain has taught her."

"Hey-day!" exclaimed he, "and what on earth can that be, Dame Wilson?"

"I am sorry to hear the Captain has so far committed himself," added the lady. "What fault is it, Mrs. Wilson? I am sure he ought to make ample reparation."

The aunt replied—"It is a foolish practice of offering to lay ridiculous and absurd wagers about trifling matters, and indeed occasionally on serious affairs. It used to offend me once a great deal; but I presume I have grown used to it, and note it less. It is a fault in her behaviour nevertheless."

Lady Elliott and the Baronet smiled, but the Captain laughed out heartily, and remarked—

"Upon my word, Mrs. Wilson, I consider that the very opposite of a fault. It is a real virtue! A positive good, a principle which perpetually teaches her discretion. It is not the winning a wager which most stimulates the gamester, but the losing one. But, in this case, the loss of the wager offered would be such a serious personal annoyance that the reflective faculties are quickened to such a degree of activity, that there is but very small danger of any young lady committing a real fault who can reflect before she speaks or acts like Jessie Wilson. The proffered bet in the first place, is checkmated by the counter-bet, so that no bet is made at all. Consequently, no wager lost or won, and the vice of the gamester is destroyed in the bud. You and Mrs. Neville look at me as if I were reasoning fallaciously; but I will lay you, Mrs. Wilson, the skin which covers the Adam's

apple in my neck, and it shall be pulled up with blister salve, to one waft of air from your fan, that Harry Neville cannot show that my deduction is illogical."

Jessie returned to the room that instant, and caught the import of the Captain's wager, and instantly added—

"And I'll lay you, Captain Leo, the white skin of my blue eye, the left one I mean, to the midriff of a spanish-fly, that you will never win a wager of my Aunt."

The aunt smiled despite herself, the Captain laughed outright, joined in an under cadence of musical mirthfulness from their visitors, and my mother and I joined, while Jessie looked first at one then the other a little surprised as if her words had more import than she perceived.

"There, there," again exclaimed the Captain, "I am checkmated in a moment. It would be easier for me with a well manned gunboat to capture a French frigate than win or lose a wager with Jessie Wilson. You see

what a vicious gambler she is become under my faulty instructions."

"I don't think it quite becoming a young girl to do so, nevertheless," said her Aunt as her fore finger and palm approximated.

"Neither do I," added my mother."

"I think you are correct," rejoined Lady Elliott; "but I am very pleased with you, Miss Wilson, and thank you for the pleasure you have given us, yet I would endeavour to control that habit, for though it may not be a great fault, still you would be as well without it, especially as it is unpleasant to your good Aunt."

"Thank you, Lady Elliot, I will try to correct myself," replied Jessie, "but the habit has become like a natural instinct."

The conversation then turned upon their departure from the Mansion on the morrow. It was chiefly confined to my mother and the Elliots. The state of their health had become very precarious, especially that of Lady Elliot, so that they were going for the benefit

of medicinal waters. There was a sadness in the look of Sir Langton which might arise from the worn and attenuated state of his lady, for he was a most affectionate man and husband. My mother's sympathetic manner and remarks seemed to touch the deeper chords of their hearts. In a few minutes she rose as if a new thought had crossed her mind, for I observed the lids of her eyes rather quickly open, she went to the side-board and took out two glasses, and filled them with wine, and with a plate of biscuits which she placed on a tray, she offered them with a remark which kindled the light of past remembrance in their faces with something of holy rapture.

My mother said—

"I have just bethought me that it is thirty years ago, this very day when I first had the opportunity to offer you nourishment. I beg you to take a glass of wine and a biscuit each, in remembrance of that circumstance."

"We need nothing to remind us of the fact," said Sir Langton, "that will never be

erased from our memory. I believe that humanly speaking we owe thirty years of life to you Mrs. Neville, and your late very excellent husband."

"Yes, indeed we do, Mrs. Neville," said his Lady, "for I feel quite certain that we should have died if you had not then come to our help. I fear we have not shown the gratitude of heart so justly due to such disinterested goodness. I wish in one sense that your son could have conscientiously taken Holy Orders, as the living of Edgecombe will soon be vacant, but we must think all things work together for some wise end."

"I am sure Lady Elliott has deprived me of the feeling of having rendered an unpaid service in her case, and made me a grateful debtor. Did not Sir Langton give the fee simple of the Angle House to my husband, and your gift of the living of Timberton to my son-in-law very much over paid our services."

"They have not cancelled our sense of it,"

said the Baronet, "and it is my intention that your son Harry shall not suffer the loss of the worth of the living of Edgecombe. I will give my attorney proper instruction as we pass through London on our journey."

After a few other friendly remarks they rose to depart, and Lady Elliot embraced my mother, both in tears, and, with benedictions, they left us. Mrs. Wilson and her niece, of whom also they took a very cordial leave, accompanied them to the front door, while I and my mother walked with them to the carriage—there we parted—and without then knowing it—we parted for ever.

When we returned to the sitting room which we did not until the splendid greys had taken them across the green and out of our sight, we found the Captain in the act of asking Jessie, this question.

"Is to day the first time you ever showed your colours at the mast-head of the Angle House?"

This fell like an unexpected clap of thunder

which sent the blood from her cheeks a moment to return with double force, which the quick eye of the questioner fully understood. "I see," he said, swaying as he stepped towards the window. "I see your cheeks recruit their colour 'like winking'—you forgot that I have spent twenty years of my life, looking out for flag signals and symbols, and can tell what vessel is nigh at hand the moment she peeps above the horizon of sky and blue water. Let me tell you it is a greater fault to be spying out the movements of your absent friends from the house top than laying foolish wagers with an old sea Captain. Now if you will bet me—"

"But I won't bet any more on a Sunday, that's downright," exclaimed Jessie.

"Now I'll bet you," he rejoined, "my illustrated two guinea copy of the Pilgrim's Progress with a likeness of the Tinker on steel, to one of your printed riddle tobacco papers, that you will before sunset."

"Done!" thoughtlessly exclaimed Jessie,

at which the winner laughed with amazing glee.

He felt an unaccountable enjoyment in catching her in any fashion of that nature. For a moment she did not perceive that she had lost: for she said with animation—

"You may laugh till your sides ache, Captain; but your 'Pilgrim's Progress' will have to change hands to-morrow."

He started off again with redoubled violence, seeing that she did not perceive that her aunt's heap of tobacco papers, with printed riddles on them, would be minus one the next time Captain Leo entered the shop.

"Never—never ah, ah a—never he-e—he won, won—ha-ha-ha a wager! Oh, Jessie, that—aha—gave me, me, me—so much glee-e-e—at in my life! It's as good as firing a French frigate ah, ah—oh-o—and saving the jolly crew!"

The Captain, between bursts of laughter mainly created by his own fancies, went to the Mansion direct: for it was drawing

near to dinner time there. His voice, laughing and coughing, reached our ears when he was on the green.

We then sat down to a refreshing cup of tea, and a quiet conversation, in which we reviewed the scene with the Vicar and the one with Sir Langton, Lady Elliott and the Captain.

After an early supper, Jessie and I had a stroll about the garden, and wiled the twilight away in delectable conversation until the last golden rays of the departed sun melted away from the distant horizon, and the shadows of night gathered about the corners and quaint symbols of the Angle House.

As we walked round the garden for the last time, we paused under the fine tall Scotch fir trees at the end of it, when Jessie looked into my face, and said—

"Listen! I always feel inexpressible delight when I hear the sound of the wind passing through the branches of fir trees. It is

almost as sweet to me as the tones of the Æolian harp, and more weird! Listen!"

We did so in breathless silence when she suddenly whispered, eagerly—

"Harry Neville, the old Angle House looks just for all the world as if it did not know whether to weep, or laugh, at the sage whisperings of these tall firs! Let us go in. 'Tis time my aunt and I were at home."

I took my parting salutation in silent ecstacy, and did as she desired; then conducted them home, and returned to three hours' study.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PIETY OF SOUND.—THE VICAR'S CHILD INDEED!

On the morrow, Sir Langton Elliott and his lady and servants necessary left the mansion of Timberton for London; and when the usual bustle incident to such an event had subsided, Captain Leo strolled into the great summer-house. This was a large octagon-shaped place substantially built of hard grey stone. It was erected five generations before by one of the ancestors of the present owner. He called himself a sentimental astronomer; and his supreme

delight was to watch the stars and passing phenomena of the lower heavens. For reasons growing out of this life-purpose of his, he caused this summer house to be erected. It was three stories high, the centre of the roof was of glass, each angle of the octagon being carried up like an obtuse gable, with a quaint finial at the apex. There were no other attempts at architectural display. The room on the ground floor was well paved with stones, like the walls, having four large windows facing the cardinal points of the compass. There was a fixed table in the centre, and a few quaintly carved chairs for summer use. During hot weather, it was a very pleasant place. It stood on an elevated spot, at first surrounded with shrubs. A cypress, a juniper, a yew, and a Scotch fir, which stood pretty close to the walls, and, in five generations, become large trees—higher than the gable finials of the octagon angles; so that they nearly enveloped the whole building at the time of which I am writing.

The second floor was fitted up with every convenience, so that it might, with equal propriety, be called either a sitting or drawing room, a study or library: for it was in fact all of them combined. The approach to this room was by a flight of stone steps facing the south of the width of one gable angle. The door of one solid piece of oak four inches thick, having some rude yet curious devices carved on it. This door opened outwards, and was almost flush with the wall, while inside there were folding doors level with the inside of the inner wall, and, as that was two feet thick, the folding doors would swing either way as required.

The room above, under the glass in the roof, was of the same shape also; and fitted up with every convenience as a bed-chamber, which was so occupied by, the then Sir Lionel Elliott for many years of his life. The son of that "sentimental astronomer" had the credit of being called in the world of Timberton,

and amongst the visitors of the Mansion, "the ante-natal metaphysician."

By what name Sir Langton Elliott and his brother Leo may be finally known by posterity remains as yet undecided. This building stood about two hundred yards from the Mansion, but almost hidden by shrubs and timber trees.

This summer-house had undergone various internal transformations to suit the purposes of the race of the Elliotts; and as the two preceding lives had been quite patriarchal in years, the changes had occurred oftener than would at first appear. Once or twice the changes were radical in their character, of which it may hereafter be necessary to speak. At the present it need only be stated that Captain Leo made use of the middle room as a study, and frequently preferred to sleep in the chamber above than in the Mansion.

The immediate object of his stroll into this place, at this time, was to put a book or two

into the capacious pockets of his loose coat. He then came up the village, stopping to say some good-natured, kind-hearted word or other to every person he met, young or old, man or woman, whether they were of the class called the "topping folks of Timberton," or the commonality. It is therefore no wonder that he was a general favourite amongst all sects and parties.

As he came across the green, in the centre of which there were three great oak trees, which must have stood there during the wars of "the Roses," and which appear to have been planted at the points of an equilateral triangle of twenty-one feet, in the midst of which a rude but very substantial instrument of condign punishment was placed, commonly called "the Stocks," although they had not been called into requisition for their legitimate purpose in the memory of anybody in Timberton.

The Captain made his way to that place where the village Witenagemote had been in

the habit of assembling, most likely from before the planting of the acorns which gave the germ power of those venerable trees. There he sat down on those "Stocks."

In a few minutes, two little girls passed that way; and I saw him beckon them to him. In a moment or two, he pulled a book out of his pocket, and they began, as I at first thought, to read; but after more carefully observing their movements, I was satisfied the Captain was only showing them the pictures, and probably explaining to them their more obvious meaning. I was interested by the sight; so stood still at the window to observe the leaves turned over until the whole was inspected. He then replaced the volume in his pocket, and took out another, which he turned over in the same way, to the evident delight of the two children. After the showman had concluded his exhibition and explanation, he, contrary to the practice of those who occupied the green at the yearly statute, put his hand into his pocket and found each of them a

copper, after which they ran across the green with a nimble foot, especially taking into the account the weight of their shoes.

When he came to the front gate of the Angle House, he saw me at the window, and beckoned me out. In a few seconds I was by his side. He said—

"Harry, lad, I have been preaching a pictorial sermon to a very attentive and intelligent congregation—meanwhile each of my audience earned as much as the labourers in the vineyard, in Palestine, in the days of the Galilean. We have been for some years past in a sort of transition state of improvement, and most of the affairs of life and the institutions of society have imbibed some portion of the better spirit; but the system of preaching goes on in the old ruts—as perversely defective and dead-set against intelligent improvement as barnacles are to migration. The successful insufficiency of preaching is something surprising, unless in instances like that which quickened the underlying acrimony of

your brother-in-law's spirit. The press and picture-books will soon put the pulpit 'no where,' as they say in relation to other races than the human."

I said, "That is very true, and as a sign of the times I understand sea Captains are becoming expounders of picture books amongst our rural population. This is a significant fact of considerable weight with me, yet there is a strange prejudice in favour of preaching the same words over and over again from one year to another. I was at the town of B. a short time back where there is a famous Unitarian preacher, and the servant girl of the family where I was staying was persuaded to go with a friend of hers to hear him. As I happened to be there that evening, I asked the girl the next morning how she liked the sermon. The Preacher talked about the degraded state of the Irish catholics, living on potatoes, scarcely ever tasting bread, and never the human food called mutton and beef. The girl replied to my question—'I

did'unt like he nothing much at all, sir; he did'unt talk about Jesus, and the new Jerusalem, nor circumcision and uncircumcision, nor not at all about the devil and all his angels, but him kept spaking about the wild Irish and potatoes, and beef and mutton, I must'unt go to hear he anyhow again.' That girl had listened to two or three sermons every Sunday from her childhood up to the age of twenty, going like the door on its hinges, neither knowing why or wherefore. I asked her the meaning of the words which were so familiar to her, and which she pronounced as glibly as any household word—as she did beef and mutton—but she knew no more of the meaning of circumcision and uncircumcision and the new Jerusalem, than the beasts which made the beef and mutton which offended the piety of her ears. I could not fail to reflect upon the essential defectiveness of that teaching which, after many years of instruction, left the *instructed* untaught. The young woman in question exhibited a full average

share of mental ability in all the domestic affairs of life. Her ear had been drilled from infancy to the reception of scripture phraseology, so that she had imbibed thoroughly the piety of sound, no more—for her rational spirit, her intellect, was in utter ignorance of what those sounds signified. I state it on my honour as a man, that I have found so-called christian men and women of forty and fifty years' standing, who have listened to preaching every Sunday all that time, who have been as distressingly ignorant of the meaning of words of large religious significance, though they must have listened at least to over two thousand sermons."

"Yes," said the Captain, "the system is altogether defective, and utterly fails in achieveing the end desired. All preaching ought to supersede the necessity of it—the same as instruction in all the arts and sciences and trades. What should we say about a master, sailor, shoemaker, or blacksmith, who, after a boy of common capacity had been under his

instruction for ten years, yet did not know the use of his tools; or of a drill sergeant, who, after ten years' discipline, made men a company of awkward squads, who had a deep appreciation of the sound 'right-left,' but did not know anything about the things those terms signified. The prevailing system of the 'Black dragoons' is obsolete and all but useless—nay, it is become vicious, as it leaves undone that which it is paid to do, and throws all sorts of impediments in the way of other persons who are not subject to bondage of that nature."

I observed that reflections of a similar nature connected with others respecting the false position in which every clergyman is unavoidably placed; formed the great reason for my not entering the church. In a modified sense the same difficulty presented itself touching the dissenting ministry.

"That's it, my lad, that is it" earnestly added he—"every parson is in a false position from the very necessity of the case, and,

consequently, he understands as a rule, less of human nature and life and the affairs of the world than other men, *cæteris paribus*. The Catholic Priest in this respect is a far superior man. He gains his supremacy of knowledge of men and women and of human conduct by a principle that is revolting to common sense and nature, which make preaching amongst catholics an affair quite subordinate to confession. This brings us to the consideration of the subject respecting which I called to speak to you. I find that you have seen fit to decline my brother's offer, for which I do not blame you, though the living of Edgecombe is a respectable one, but I know that you have manly character sufficient to face the battle of life; let the difficulties be what they may if you have a good conscience for a comrade. Your remarks having brought this subject to the point required, our feet you see have brought us close to Dame Wilson's shop, so that we must let it rest a few minutes until we come out, for I am going

to claim the wager which I won yesterday of the bonnie Jessie. By the by, Harry Neville, you seemed yesterday to pay her more attention than a mere tutor should or ought to pay a fair pupil, but perhaps it was only mere courtesy as they were your guests. You must not be jealous of an 'old sea-hulk,' though, if you have any calculations of that nature, for I assure you I do not mean to be a rival, yet I like this lady Wilson's niece amazingly; I wish sometimes my Boy George was as fond of her as I am and I have told him so."

The captain was fumbling in his pocket and did not see the burning glow on my cheeks and forehead, nor the sudden flash of my eyes, nor the contraction of my brows. He had unthinkingly roughly touched the tenderest part of my nature, and at a time when my mind was disturbed by circumstances too acutely for me to be at ease even under the ordinary events of life. I was about to leave Timberton

—to be separated from one whom I had passionately loved for several years—one to whom I had at length declared my affection, and from whom I had received the tenderest tokens of reciprocated love. I felt that I had no cause to distrust a woman whose character was of the firmest—whose discretion was equal to her firmness, and whose truthfulness was worthy of all praise and confidence.

Still, the personal character of George Willifer Elliott—his manners and actual position, and his future prospects were of a kind very much calculated to charm any woman in any sphere of life—much more, I thought, a shop-keeper's orphan niece. He will visit the mansion—his future home and probable inheritance—and, supported by his father, make his daily calls and evening visits at Dame Wilson's, while I shall be far away, struggling for the means of future living, in a path which as yet I saw not clearly, but pictured full of roughnesses and canopied

with pelting storms, whose blackness enveloped its horizon beyond the power of human vision to penetrate. These reflections passed through my mind in a few seconds, and I mastered myself enough to say, without betraying my emotions—

"It seems, then, the Ensign's mind is disposed to wander in a different direction?"

"God forbid! Harry," he exclaimed, with vehemence; "have you any reason to think so?"

His manner startled me, and I was in doubt what he meant me to understand. My fears seemed to suggest that he hoped his son's thoughts did not wander from Jessie—but there was another construction to his words, and which I really intended, for the way to the Vicarage was in an opposite direction. I replied to his direct question—

"I have no reason to think that Jessie Wilson has given Mr. Willifer Elliott—"

"No, no," he interrupted me, "that is not what I mean. I do not suppose she has

shown George any particular favours, but, look you, if you turn round the way to those tall trees beyond, the triangle-oaks is in a different direction. Do you think—have you any reason to think that, that very 'black dragoon' has enlisted, or is trying to enlist, the Ensign into the ranks of the Rushworths?"

In a moment I saw the difficulty in which I was placed. The Captain stood still, and I was sure he would not move a step until I had given him a satisfactory answer. I mean satisfactory as far as truthfulness on my part was concerned. Equivocation or evasion with him was out of the question, nor would it have been in accordance with my nature, yet I had keen personal feeling why I should not answer. I began, however, at a side point, by saying—

"You must be fully sensible, Captain Leo, that the Vicar is anxious to see his brother's child—an orphan, like Jessie Wilson— handsomely settled in life."

"His brother's child, indeed," drawled out the Captain. "There is no doubt he would like to see her well provided for, and so should I, and all the young women in England; but I should not like to see her settled 'cheek-by-jowl' with my son, though he may make a '*bar sinister* in the escutcheon of the Elliott's.' I am sure you do not call your remarks an answer to my question?"

"Not for a moment," I added quickly. "They were intended only as prefatory to saying that I do not believe for a moment that Amy Rushworth has in any way captivated the heart of the Ensign—but I do think the Vicar is seeking to bring them to an engagement."

After a short pause, he asked me, with unusual deliberation in his words—

"Harry Neville, do you think so from mere appearances and stray fancies? or have you seen them together in a fashion which suggests such thoughts? or have you heard either say—"

"Oh, no; I have never seen or heard anything whatever from them. My grounds for thinking so are perhaps more dissatisfactory, because they are direct; and yet to say so seems like speaking damagingly to the real or supposed interests of my brother-in-law. He has himself told me that is a part of his policy in life."

Another pause followed of longer duration, during which he gently took hold of my summer blouse, and gathered it up, bit by bit, into his strong grasp until his hand was full, when he said in an undertone—

"I see clearly now why he is so angry, that you have refused, or declined, availing yourself of Sir Langton's offer. Your candour, Harry, has rendered me a great service. It cannot do you any harm. Your conscience, I am sure, acquits you that you have not done wrong. I would a thousand times rather see George Willifer Elliott married to Ebna Ebonal, and all the gipsies of England squatting on the estates of Timberton and Edge-

combe, than that man's daughter should be the wife of my illegitimate son! There's a secret for your keeping—keep it."

"I will!" I said emphatically. I also said, internally—

"Neither shall Jessie Wilson, if I can prevent it."

CHAPTER XV.

JESSIE'S WAGER, AND ARTICLES OF TREATY.

In a minute after I was intrusted with the secret of the Captain, we were inside the village shop, confronting the stately dame and her charming niece.

"Good morning, ladies," cried out the Captain with a certain boisterous hilarity peculiar to him. "I am here in the capacity of a cruel-hearted creditor, who is determined to exact the uttermost."

"Oh, no such thing as the uttermost!" said

Jessie. "It is the topmost tobacco paper, with a printed riddle on its forehead. There it is, Captain Leo. I am glad we have balanced accounts: for I have had a pain in my shoe all this morning, and could not imagine the cause; but now I find it was perhaps because I had not discharged my obligations. I'll bet you one of the most curious objects of antique art that you ever saw to the secret that you have just told Harry Neville, that you cannot find out that riddle by your own sharpness in nine seconds, nine minutes, and nine hours!"

The Captain gave a significant glance at me for a moment, which she saw, and said—

"Oh, yes! you see I am as good as Ebna Ebonal. I knew you had told him a secret before your eyes said, 'There now; has not this girl dealings with the very devil?' naughty man I ought to say. Will you take my wager?"

Dame Wilson bowed to us as we entered and now looked courteously on what was passing as she sat twisting up some hanks of thread,

and laying them with mathematical precision in a small box, once filled with choice cigars.

"Before I lay that wager, it is but fair that I should know what this 'most curious object of antique art' is? I am not in the habit of buying a pig in a bag."

"Nay, nay, Captain Leo. I think you are too fast," said Jessie, "and in this case more than a little unjust."

"How so, Jessie?" he asked.

"Because you don't do as you wish to be done by, which is contrary to the golden rule of you know who, better than I know what's what."

"But I will do as I wish to be done by," added the Captain.

"And in this wager?" she asked quickly; while he replied as quickly—

"Yes!"

"Then if I show you my 'most curious object of antique art,' you will have to show me your 'secret,'—so I shall win the secret if I lose the wager. Now, as a gallant gentleman,

as well as a gallant Captain, you will, as a matter of courtesy, show me the 'secret' first!"

The Captain looked for an instant as if he had, like a big booby at school, forgotten the multiplication-table of eight times seven, which he thought he had learned, and scratched his head as if he could find something outside his cranium to impart the desired information. His comical look—half assumed and half real—mightily pleased the fancy of Dame Wilson; so that she sat and laughed and tittered until her very finger-ends reciprocated the emotion of mind, and sympathised with her quivering nostrils. Her forefinger and palm approximated!

With a look of solemn gravity, Jessie asked the hero of some score hard-fought battles—

"Which do you want this morning, sir? cigars or tobacco?"

I was astonished at the brightness and steadiness of her eyes—so soft and yet so penetrating. The upper lids hung over, and

bent down slightly in the middle, casting a shade over the blue pupil, which intensified the expression.

The Captain replied, still holding the printed riddle tobacco paper between his left finger and thumb—

"I begin to think I do not know which I want; but clearly enough perceive that—heads you win, tails I lose! You and Ebna Ebonal are too much for me. I will, however, try what I can do with this celestial riddle. Dead beaten, I see, Dame Wilson! How foolish I feel just now in facing this paper. It is worse than storming a battery:

"The moon three days old,
The next sign to Cancer;
Pat and rat (without the tail),
Now, sir, for your answer!"

"Well, to be sure! I only know the next sign to Cancer is—your humble servant, Leo; but it's all a mystery, so, as I dare not gamble with you, Jessie, in this case, I must 'gib it up,' as the Jamaica *darkies* say, and put it in

my pocket for quiet consideration the next time the Vicar comes out with a Phillippic against the feminine celebrities of Timberton."

"And masculine notables, who dare not do as they wish to be done by into the bargain," Jessie quickly added, very closely imitating the voice of the Captain.

"Do you hear that, Harry Neville? Is it not enough to provoke Saint Leo? and to see how the young petticoat Roscius is applauded by the principal part of the audience. I must put this riddle-paper into my pocket for future study, and hoist a flag of truce—for the first time in my life from necessity. My conditions are—

"Firstly, That you, Jessie Wilson, shall show me this 'most curious object of antique art' without further delay.

"Secondly, That I, Captain Leo Elliott shall show you a most beautiful work of modern art forthwith.

"Thirdly, That Harry Neville shall decide

which is the most valuable—the work of ancient or modern art."

Jessie caught the cue of the Captain, and instantly rejoined—

"I, Jessie Wilson, as principal of the high contracting party of this riddle-and-wager truce, object absolutely and altogether to article the First, as an unwarrantable assumption of the right to ask for such a privilege.

"Article Second, Agreed to unconditionally.

"Article Third, Altogether superseded by the nullification of article first."

"Captain Leo's compliments to Miss Wilson, and he begs leave to say that he is willing to strike out article first, objected to by her, providing she will substitute the following, viz.:—That when article second, which now must be considered article first, is carried out in its fullest extent, Jessie, otherwise Miss Wilson, shall explain how she could feel a pain in her shoe.

"Nullification of article third. Admitted."

"Jessie Wilson, orphan, agrees to the emendation of Captain Leo Elliott, feeling sure—no, not quite he will—but quite sure he ought, as a matter of right and courtesy, to perform his part of this aforesaid truce first. This must be understood an ultimatum."

During this rhodomontade, Dame Wilson and I remained silent, each speculating about matters widely different relative to the suggestions called into existence by what was passing. As soon as the word "ultimatum" was uttered, the Captain took out of his pockets a beautifully bound and illustrated edition of John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," in two octavo volumes. On the fly-leaf of the first volume was written—"Jessie Wilson will do Captain Leo Elliott, R.N., a favour by accepting this work."

"Now, Mademoiselle, fill my case with cigars, and just tell us how you felt a pain in your shoe: for Mr. Neville and I are in haste to be off to the Angle House."

"Ay, that is easily done: for I dropped a

two pound weight on my foot, which made a pain in my shoe where my toes happened to be—the great Tom-toe consulting with the 'little pick-a-darling' about the dance 'Roger de Coverley.' But I have a very hard task to perform now, though a very pleasant one, Captain Leo. The pain in my shoe has taken a leap into my heart! I—I—feel—the pain of gratitude most delightfully. I hope this work will teach me not to lay wagers on a Sunday!"

"Nor quiz your neighbours from the house-top on the Sabbath," added the Captain, as he took up his case of cigars and wished them "Good morning."

I did the latter also, and followed him out of the shop.

As soon as he had lit his cigar, and had taken three or four hearty pulls at it, he said:

"That girl would be a rich treasure to any man, especially one who knew properly how to develope and appreciate her nature and character. I should like to know something

more about that stately dame: for you may depend upon it, Harry, she has passed through other experiences than those which have visited her in that shop. It seems that the history of both aunt and niece are involved in mystery: for nobody in Timberton has any knowledge of their antecedents, unless it is your mother; and perhaps you from what you have heard Mrs. Neville say. I do not wish for any secrets; but if you know any fact respecting Dame Wilson's whereabouts and position before she came here, I should like to learn it."

I told him I was as ignorant about the matter as the smoke of his cigar, but thought it was probable that my mother was in her confidence to a larger extent than anybody in the village; that I did not think she knew any particular fact of who she was, or where she came from to Timberton; but that she had an unwavering confidence in her integrity as a chaste and virtuous lady, who was by some calamity reduced in circumstances; and that

Jessie was verily what she was called, her "niece."

He said—"I am perfectly satisfied about this last matter; and, as I intimated before, that is more than I believe about the folks amongst yonder trees: But I wanted to tell you, Harry Neville, that if you are desirous to follow in the steps of your father—and a better man, and a nobler-hearted one you cannot take as an example—I will supply you with all the necessary funds from a sense of gratitude, or a 'sense of duty,' as the dame would say, for what your parents have done for my brother and Lady Elliott; and I may be allowed to say, from my appreciation of your father's character, and the admiration and esteem which I have for your mother. Believe me, I shall feel the obliged party. I do not want to enter further into the matter just now; the details can be easily arranged when you have matured your plans for the future."

The frank and manly manner in which he expressed his desires, and proffered his friendly

assistance, failed not to give me great pleasure. It called forth the best feelings of my nature, and I expressed my thanks with the fulness of my whole heart.

"Say nothing about your feelings, Harry," he interrupted; "but give me some credit for understanding you without explanation. Who is that girl coming out of the Angle House, ay? She's a fine-made woman, Harry, and rather good-looking too! Who is she, a visitor?"

"Oh, no," I replied. "She is John Wimbush's daughter, who is out of a situation, so she is come home to stay for a while, I suppose until she can obtain another place. She is a smart girl, but rather too full of herself; yet she is, as you say, a very fine figure; but the misfortune is, she knows it, and expects everybody to admire her accordingly. She has been from home some seven years, and in that time changed from a pretty girl to a fine woman. My mother has engaged to do all

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she can to get her into another situation as speedily as possible: for she quotes Dr. Watts in referring to her case:

'For Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do!'"

"Your mother is a woman of great experience," he observed. "In what capacity has she been engaged?"

"As a kind of nursery governess, or upper nursemaid. She was put to school for a year or two by her aunt, who lives in the town of B——, where she seems to have made good use of her time, and her natural abilities also. She did not come home until last Tuesday; and from what I heard her say to our old servant, she has in that time gathered up the history of Timberton for seven years, and has given her verdict respecting most of the contingent events which now interest the people of the village, declaring 'warfare without spite,' as she expresses herself, 'with the Vicar

and all the farmers' sons.' I have given you all the knowledge I have of her, except that her name is Eliza."

While I was speaking, he first looked at the Angle House, then at the three great oaks on the green: ages ago christened the "Angle Oaks," according to the opinion of some folks, by others the "Trinity Oaks," by some knowing persons called the "Three Wizards," by others the "Ancient Magi." After looking first at the trees, then at the house, and so backward and forward several times, I expected he was about to make some remarks respecting their age or character, or comment upon the traditions respecting the trees or the stocks; but he, somewhat contrary to his courteous behaviour, said quickly:

"Good morning! We will talk about the matter another day. I will call at John Wimbush's, and learn the sound of that girl's voice!"

Five minutes after, my mother and I sat down to dinner, when I gave her a general

statement of what had passed at the village shop, and the reiterated offers of Captain Leo, to all of which she listened with much interest, particularly the laughing of Dame Wilson.

CHAPTER XVI.

DAME WILSON'S LETTER.—TEN-POUND-TEN.

By an instinctive feeling or mutual understanding, no reference was made by my mother or me to any of the matters which transpired on the Sunday until the next Thursday afternoon. I had again fallen into my usual habit of reading, with the pen and ink standing before me to make notes of such matters as I deemed useful to the dimly-perceived purposes of my future career. It was one of those delightful days of June which makes the heart

rejoice to feel conscious existence. I was sitting with the window wide open to enjoy the exhilarating zephyrs as they came perfumed with the odour of the flowers: my mother sitting opposite to me at her useful sewing, when she said in her quiet way:

"What remark made the deepest impression on your mind on Sunday?"

"On Sunday!" I repeated, with some surprise. "Sunday! Let me see."

She interrupted me by saying:

"If it is necessary for you to hesitate, and look about you reflectively, you have not yet gathered up and disposed of that day's experience. Yet this is the fourth day. I have reconsidered all that then passed, and have settled the question for myself; but now I bethink myself you had perhaps more elements in your mind in a state of agitation that day than I had; or at least some which would be more likely to sway your judgment through the impulses of your emotions and passions. William Rushworth has left us alone

for a few days; but I am informed that his preaching at us that Sunday has given general dissatisfaction to the congregation."

She paused, and readjusted her sewing; so, after a short reflection, I said:

"I have gathered up nothing from him worth remembering to distinguish that day from others, unless it be to avoid such behaviour."

I was perfectly satisfied about what my mother was thinking; but she did not know what had passed between Jessie and me at the top of the Angle House, and I was certainly in a quandary, and could not honestly say whether the words of the niece or the aunt had the ascendancy. The former had said to me:

"'If all the world were mine, I feel that I should not be happy without you, Harry Neville!"

The latter had said to us both, speaking of William Rushworth:

"He cannot be worse than his father!"

This last had found a deeper lodgment in my mother's mind than the contemptuous words and conduct of the Vicar could do, vicious as they were. She was merciful and forgiving, and knew how to comfort herself from her inward life in all the conflicts of a domestic nature, by the approbation of a good conscience and a calm judgment.

The stray remark—no, not stray remark: for Dame Wilson was not in the habit of speaking about her knowledge of things beyond the world of Timberton unadvisedly and accidentally. Therefore, the words of that lady were to my mother most remarkable. They were also noted by me when made as extraordinary. We did not for a moment suspect that she knew anything about the antecedents of the Vicar; but her words were pregnant with knowledge of the most discriminating character. Our knowledge of his father was of the scantiest kind, and mainly consisted in knowing the fact that he committed suicide. The usual verdict of the jury

was "temporary insanity," but what the circumstances were which threw his mind off its balance, were all unknown to us. Dame Wilson's remark implied a knowledge of the daily life of the actual living man.

After reflecting in this manner, I looked at my mother, whose quiet and affectionate eyes, beaming with intelligence and worth, were turned towards me. She said—

"I have a decided conviction that the Vicar has and is treading a thorny path, and that his father did so in his lifetime, in addition to which I believe the particulars are known to Mrs. Wilson. 'He cannot be worse than his father,' falling from the lips of such a woman implies an immense amount of knowledge."

"The very words which I have just used in my own mind, mother," I added. "Our thoughts have seized hold of the same view of those words. It is rather singular she has never told you anything about that of which she is evidently well informed. The gross way that he has so often treated the folks at

the shop has been more than enough to provoke her to talk about his connexions."

"True, Harry; but there are weightier considerations in Mrs. Wilson's mind, depend upon it. She holds her rod in abeyance for some great occasion. I would not be too sure, though: for, after all, it may be from a fear of giving me—giving us a feeling of prejudice against him, already stronger than true Christians should feel. She knows how we are united by family ties; and as she could say nothing in praise, she has studiously avoided saying anything of an opposite tendency. Whatever her knowledge may be, I am sure its a virtuous motive which has induced her to keep it from us and the people of Timberton."

"I am afraid he has offended the Captain beyond his forgiveness," I remarked. "Do you think he knows anything about the Vicar more than we? But I do not see why that question should be asked but from idle curiosity. I wish I could forget his existence altogether. But, as Young says—

'Wishing, of all employments, is the worst.' Though I do not endorse that opinion, but think he is nearer the mark in calling it—

'The constant hectic of a fool!'"

"Many things, these last three or four years, have induced me to think that Captain Leo knows more than is pleasant to the Vicar. I do not mean so much about him as about his father—not that he is responsible for his father's sins, whatever they were,—but, somehow, we cannot escape the odium or the influence thereof: for it clings to children's children frequently as naturally as the sweet odour of good ancestors—of a father descends to a son. Has he said anything to you about—"

"Yes, yes," I said hastily, for I did not want to be asked any question about the Vicar; "yes, yes, mother; the Captain, like a noble-hearted man, has offered to defray all my expenses if I choose to go to Hackney, or, as he puts it, to 'follow in the wake of my father.'"

"Did you tell him you had decided to go to Hackney?"

"No, mother; I thought I had better not."

"Why? But here comes Mrs. Wilson."

The coming of that person saved me from the necessity of replying to that pertinent query: for I felt that my remarks would be calculated to give considerable pain to her, at least for a season.

My mother had not seen Mrs. Wilson from the Sunday evening, though they both had been thinking about the same things nearly ever since they parted. When she was seated opposite my mother, I picked up my pen to make a few extracts from Galileo's works on the doctrine of motion, and proceeded to make some original notes relative to motion and life. I was soon more than half oblivious of their presence and conversation.

The following sentence, however, arrested my attention, and made me look up—

"The Vicar is altogether wrong, Mrs.

Neville, in his opinion why I and Jessie did not go to church last Sunday morning."

"That is not surprising," my mother added, "for whatever he once supposes to be the cause of this or that, he adheres to it in despite of every argument and statement against it, though to others as clear as noonday. He closes his eyes to conviction; so it seems at times like wilful blindness."

"If he had been the Pope, he could have dispensed with the advice of the College of Cardinals," I said, "for he has a kind of belief that he is infallible."

"He is altogether wrong," repeated the Dame, for I use that word in its proper and original sense meaning lady, and it was in that sense always used in relation to her in Timberton, unless there was an exception in the Vicar. "He is altogether wrong: for I wish to tell you that I received a rather singular letter on Saturday night, which so engaged us that we really forgot to get ready for church until it was too late. You know how I

dislike going after service has commenced. The letter in question came from the firm of Wells and Trueman, London attorneys, who used to manage our affairs when we had affairs of a legal nature to manage, which has not been of late years. There are several things in the letter which perplex me a great deal, so that I do not like to write a reply without taking your opinion to help me to form one, or correct any that may have taken hold of my mind."

At this I took up my book to leave the room, but Dame Wilson interposed by remarking—

"Don't leave, Mr. Neville. I shall be pleased to hear your opinion: for if it be a secret, you surely can keep it as securely as the one Jessie discovered was intrusted to you by Captain Leo."

I acknowledged her courtesy, and sat down again, while my mother glanced at me: for I had not made her acquainted with that part of my conversation with him. She produced the letter, and proceeded—

"With your permission, I will read such portions of the letter as may be deemed necessary in this case. It says—

"'We have received a letter from a legal friend of ours, of the highest standing in Jamaica, to inquire if you, or any other members of your blood-relations, are now living? and to find out, as early as possible, who of the first and second degree are living in England. He says there is a gentleman of about sixty years of age still living there, who has some important matter to communicate, but of what nature he has not informed us.'"

At this moment, Captain Leo suddenly turned into the front garden, and his keen eye caught a sight of Dame Wilson beyond my mother, in the room. He did not come to us through the house door, but to the open window. With apologies for intrusion and general inquiries, he ended by saying—

"I have brought for Harry Neville's inspection, and study if he likes, a volume of Emmanuel Swedenborg, his principal work

touching human affairs, called 'Opera Philosophica et Mineralogica,' and another volume by the great genius of Germany, Leibnitz. It contains his philosophic works, and is edited by Raspe, who was a man of mark."

My mother asked him to walk in, but his eye caught a sight of the letter in Dame Wilson's hand, so he added—

"No, no; I find you are engaged," and again apologised for the interruption. "Besides, I have other fish to fry, as the saying goes. No discourtesy to the ladies present; but I can see the way open to an interesting tête-à-tête with a charming young lady while the old folks are settling matters of business. You see, Dame Wilson, we young men, or, as Sir John Falstaff says, 'men who are in the van-ward of youth,' know how to catch hold of opportunities—to take the bull by his horns!"

She replied—"True, true, Captain Leo; and that very respectable personage, Mr. John Bull, a son of the old gentleman—not far from

the 'scroll of age'—has been and may again be caught in that fashion, or in his own gins. —Have you found out the tobacco paper riddle?"

"That's a matter of private business, madame, which I shall shortly have to discuss with the high contracting party. It forms the third motive or reason for the visit I am about making to Miss Wilson. My first—"

"Is to cover the appearance of the other two reasons or motives," added my mother more hastily than she was wont to speak.

When the lady said—"Oh, I know the first well enough. It is to purchase some tobacco or cigars."

"You never was farther from the truth, Mrs. Wilson: for the first reason or motive is to tell Jessie Wilson a dream which I had last night. I have informed you all what my first and third motives are; and as you do not follow nor approve of the naughty practice of gambling by betting, I shall go and lay a wager with Jessie that she cannot find out my

second motive or reason for calling, even after I have informed her of my first and third. For the present, good afternoon, ladies. Harry, I hope you will properly entertain your guest until I return: for I like to Leonize without rivalry in a case of this nature! Never on salt water. Then the more the merrier until they are sent under hatches!"

Innocent, light-hearted, good humour, good sense, and good feeling, moved about with the old sea-Captain wherever he went. His visits to the Angle House were not particularly favourable specimens of his behaviour—though, perhaps, he was at times a little more noisy—bnt he afterwards told me that he was often noisy to rudeness that he might have the pleasure of being scolded by the calm wisdom of my mother. If he called at the tailor's shop window, he carried the same atmosphere—nor did he leave an atom behind him when he went to the "smithy," for there he was always well charged, and the electricity of his spirit gave wind to the big

bellows, for it was often that the beam-handle thereof was in his hand. Captain Leo did oftener than was suspected take up the blacksmith's sledge-hammer when a ploughshare was to be forged, and come in with a regular "pounder," making the operation ring again with the proverbial "smithy" music, conveyed by the symbolic words—"ten pound ten!—ten-pound-ten!—ten-pound-ten!" The Captain was proud, and justly so, of the strength of his blow, for it was chiefly gained by use—for he had worked his way to his position at sea. When he sat on the stocks with the old men his manner was as pleasant to them as it was to the two children to whom he preached his pictorial sermon from the Pilgrim's Progress.

CHAPTER XVII.

NOBLE PURPOSE.—THE VICAR REPROVED BY DARK SAYINGS.

When the Captain had passed the gate, and a few remarks had been made about his good-hearted character, Dame Wilson proceeded with her letter:—

"'A gentleman still living there, who has some important matter to communicate, but of what nature he has not informed us. We think it not unlikely that the gentleman mentioned is your brother, who you supposed

died of yellow fever soon after the great calamity which '—but that I need not read, Mrs. Neville—my remembrances are, perhaps, not so pleasant as yours—but I do not now trouble, for the storms referred to forced me to a haven at Timberton, where I have found an independent living and a quiet home, and, what I know how to appreciate, a few sincere friends, and but one —"

She suddenly paused, yet for an instant only, when she again glanced at the letter and continued—

"'That he has acquired property, and wants to learn all about his relations, that he may devise it by will; but of this we have no kind of intimation, and yet the nature of the inquiry suggests that idea as the most obvious.'"

Here she paused again to give some explanatory information. It was to this effect, that Jessie Wilson was, as she had beforetime assured my mother, the daughter of a misguided sister, who had been obliged to

provide for herself about the same time, or a few years before, she had herself commenced shopkeeping at Timberton, and that sister had become governess in the family of a wealthy West Indian planter, where her misfortune happened.

My mother listened with most affectionate attention, so did I with breathless interest, but I distinctly found my thoughts leaping to where one was Leo-nizing to one whom I passionately loved, and who, I feared, would be listening to the name of a man not in the "van-ward of his youth," but on the first verge. My mother saw that I suddenly twitched my upper lip, and, as she knew that I had inherited that peculiarity from my father, she was too well acquainted with what it signified in him not to see pretty clearly the thoughts and emotions of my mind. The letter was continued—

"'There is one special inquiry relative to an unfortunate event respecting your sister to which the necessity of the case requires

reference, which alone would justify our doing so. It is this—find out, if you have any means, if the child of her sister, whose name was ———, is alive, and, if so, by what name is she called.'

"You see, Mrs. Neville, there is a blank left in the place where the name should occur. Now, I do not know whether it is a blank made by Messrs. Wells and Trueman, or by the legal gentleman who has written to them. I will carefully read the passage over again."

She did, and again paused. My thoughts were much too scattered by what was suggested by the affair itself, and the "next sign to Cancer," to say anything to remove the difficulty, so I waited for my mother to speak. She did as follows—

"There doubtless is some uncertainty about the point raised, but it does not seem to me to be material. Presuming that you have no other sister—"

"I have no other," said the lady.

"Then the chief point is clear enough, for Jessie is alive and well. So there will be no difficulty about her; and the other point—why the blank space was left, and by whom, can be ascertained by letter, as your brother, it seems is still living."

"No, no," Dame Wilson said sharply, so much so that both of us looked at her with surprise, which she observed, as she proceeded—

"You perceive I am a little excited, and, indeed, the more I think of the matter the more I feel my capability to do what I resolve. It is not clear that the gentleman in question is my brother. The words are—I will read them again—'We think the gentleman mentioned is your brother, who, you suppose, died of yellow fever.' There is, no certainty but 'we think' and, 'you suppose, died.'"

Here I observed. "Unless the attorneys had something like good reasons they would not have ventured upon such a conjecture." My mother then rejoined, "I think the person

mentioned is either your brother or the person who wronged your sister, and who now is desirous to make some handsome reparation for that wrong."

"Do you think that there is any substantial grounds for believing the last case as the truth?"—eagerly inquired the stately Dame, rising from her chair, as she spoke. "If it be so, and this I will first learn, he shall not have a word of information from me. No, not if he were as rich as twenty Rothschilds, and was able and willing to make Jessie the Queen of Jamaica. I have kept her and myself from want without aid from him and have secured sufficient to do that for her when I am dead. I would sooner see him die crushed under the weight of his own gold and late remorse than she should ever touch the forced fruits of a diseased liver and a death-bed repentance. Her pure fingers shall never feel the polluting contamination of gold accruing from her mother's misfortune and unreflecting transgression, if I have the power to

prevent. I am also quite sure that my child Jessie will shun such a legacy with contempt. If the gentleman is my Brother, I shall receive him as one from the dead, whom I loved dearly, but I have no reason to think I was incorrectly informed respecting his death; this I will be sure of first, and instruct Messrs Wells and Trueman accordingly, but, if it be the man whom I suspect, he may cast his wealth into the sea and die with his soul tortured with the reflection that the only friend of his victim would rather choke him with his gold than accept it."

It unfortunately happened that during the utterance of the last words of Dame Wilson that my brother-in-law, in his unceremonious manner, made his way into the room so that he heard them, and, as he never let an opportunity pass which gave him a chance to have a fling at one against whom he had an antipathy, he thought proper to comment upon the words of Dame Wlson. The subject at issue had shown us that she really was a woman not

to be trifled with, while her remark on Sunday had satisfied us that if the Vicar did not know anything of her antecedents, she knew a great deal about his—and, finally, that her mind was just then quickened with a remembrance of past wrongs too keenly to be trespassed upon by heartless sneers and sarcastic malevolence.

"Very pretty, indeed," he exclaimed; "the best proof that you have no love of gold is that your conscience will not allow you to take more than fifty per cent. in trade while your neighbours are satisfied with thirty or forty. 'Rather choke him with his gold than accept it,' why that is benevolence itself, and yet you are trying all manner of means to cajole the young Ensign into a *mesalliance* to make you and somebody's brat at once rich and respectable."

She to whom he spoke looked at him with such scornful indignation as I never before witnessed, she said—

"If I were in my own house, I would tell you what you really are and what your father

was before you—it will be benevolence now to tell you only, that you are a fool. Mrs. Neville, for the present I wish you adieu; good afternoon, Mr. Neville."

As she walked out of the room, I saw that the Vicar felt conscious that he had committed himself beyond forgiveness. He wanted, but dared not encounter the condemning flashes of her indignant eyes. He seemed as if he wished to gather from her face how much knowledge her words contained, but was too great a moral coward to look higher than the hem of her garment as it swept along the floor.

My mother felt too deeply grieved to speak, and, as she sat looking through the open window at Dame Wilson as she passed in the same stately manner through the flower garden and front gateway, I saw what I had never seen, but at my father's death, my dear mother's eyes filled with tears. She had turned herself so that the Vicar, the cause of those tears of agony, should not be gratified by a sense of his evil triumph, if he did not feel

himself rebuked by the words of virtuous indignation which he had heard.

I was myself exasperated with him, and felt that he was not only a fool but a liar! Meanwhile, he proceeded to say a great many things in an attempt to justify what he had said to our guest, but they were uttered, in such an incoherent manner that, with the divided attention paid to what he was saying, I could not perceive to what he was driving. In a short time, he caught hold of a line of argument which went to show that I was responsible for all the misunderstanding of the family—for the dissensions between friends —and, finally, for blasting the prospect of the respectable part of the family by my rejecting the overtures and contemning the proffered patronage of Sir Langton Elliott "to gratify my self-conceited notions of theology and dissent."

My silence seemed especially to annoy him, which at once assured me that I had wisely resolved to hold my tongue. Having failed to pro-

voke any retort to his aggravating remarks by his comments in one line, he slided into another, as if infatuated by some power which was pushing him to destruction. He reproached the Captain as a double-faced fellow, who had nothing to do himself, so went about intermeddling with other people's affairs, and setting the whole village at loggerheads to please his bellicose habits and disposition—encouraging dissenters, propagating loose and immoral notions of religion, and lending the works of freethinkers and infidels to young men of feeble intellect and no judgment.

He had picked up and glanced at the works of Leibnitz and Swedenborg, and thrown them down again on the table with a bang, which a little startled my mother, who sat with her hands clasped together, and looking at the flower garden.

He then went on to speak of Sir Langton and Lady Elliott in a strain of fulsome adulation, which would have filled them with disgust if they had heard it. He predicted ruin

unless some fortunate event in the hands of Providence brought about a more desirable condition of things than such as those in contemplation by a vulgar-minded seaman and a *parvenu* lady shopkeeper. When he had reached this point, I felt strongly tempted to retort; but my eye fell upon the open piano, and a moment after I was playing the Pastoral Symphony, after which I slided into the Hallelujah Chorus.

When I looked round again, the Vicar was not there; but my beloved mother sat at the table, with the tea things before her. She said, smiling sorrowfully—

"Come, Harry, let us have a cup of tea in quiet. Where these things are to end, begins to trouble me. The good influence of the Angle House seems to be in abeyance; but the great Intelligence in nature is not only good, but unchangingly good. All other good influences are subordinate to and dependent on that. William Rushworth acts like a man

blinded by evil designs. Mrs. Wilson said truly, 'he is a fool!'"

I added—"Depend on it, mother, there is a strange revelation to be made some day; and the Vicar has to-day been made sensible that his antecedents are well known to one person in Timberton. Henceforth Dame Wilson will hold him in 'durance vile' by the intelligence which will flash condemnation into his soul. What do you think of her view of the affair which brought her here? There is every reason to believe that she means what she says."

"Nobody can doubt that who has any knowledge of her character," said my mother. "I can well understand, and appreciate her conduct. She is not unlikely to consult the Captain. Come, sit down, and let us have tea."

I did as she desired.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BODY AND BREECHES.—WESLEYAN HYMN BOOK. CAPTAIN LEO'S MORNING SONG.

It is a common saying that it is the last straw which breaks the camel's back, and though there is no truth in the statement in the absolute sense, yet the significence of the saying is unmistakeable.

Dame Wilson had endured a thousand insults and gibes and contumacious sayings from the Vicar, during his residence in Timberton, without retaliating in the slightest

degree. She bore, with dignified indifference, if not with Christian meekness, the ill-advised behaviour of one whose position ought to have taught him better conduct, if it failed to improve his heart; but there is an impossibility hanging about all human beings and conditions of life, which inevitably shows itself; clearly proving that the strongest are finite—the most perfect, peccable—the wisest fallible; and that the most peaceful, patient, and long-suffering of the human family, may be driven to desperation at last. The continual dropping of water wears away the hardest stone; and it is a fact that the feet of brass statues of saints have been consumed by the kisses of devotees. The Vicar had given the last stroke—from which the spark was smitten which kindled a fire which he had not the ability to extinguish. It is quite certain that he knew nothing whatever of their antecedents from personal knowledge, nor did he know anybody else personally who might have assumed the name of Wilson. To

suppose so, would be to make him, not only a fool, but an idiot, for if he had known anything at all, it must have been connected with a consciousness that Dame Wilson knew facts about his family which would seal his lips in a moment. As it was, he had committed a fatal blunder, a gross insult utterly unworthy a gentleman—an unpardonable offence, as the Vicar under whose ministrations she had sat for nine or ten years. Her indignation and resentment were temperate, considering the unprovoked insult, and it is no wonder that the sense of the wrongful conduct of "Rushworth," as she ever after called him, was still visible in her countenance when she reached home. It did not require many seconds for the Captain to perceive what had occurred, the general facts only were related to the Captain, for Dame Wilson would not defile her lips by re-uttering such infamous insinuations.

It will not excite surprise that the Captain's wrath was a little roused, when it is

remembered how he resented the preachment of the Vicar on the Sunday. Indeed, his mind then required but a spark to set it in a blaze, and, with his force of nature and character, his wrath was no trifle; but it never led him to the vulgar practice of profane swearing, so common to gentlemen even of that age, and of the naval profession especially; but he had a kind of oath which was always sacred with him, for if he ever swore it, all hope of his non-performance was at an end. His crew would have gone with him to victory, through blood and slaughter and death, and died by his side to have defended him, as gay in heart as if called up to an extra allowance of grog. His oath was not profane but ludicrous.

After having gathered up all the Dame felt disposed to say, he lit a cigar and gave three or four hard and long draws, almost hiding his head in the smoke, from behind which he said—

"'By my body and breeches,' if it were not

for the sake of Mrs. Neville and her daughter, I would turn the scoundrel out of Timberton and the Church also—The idiotic caco-demon. By my body and breeches I would: out upon him—the idiotic caco-demon."

When he left the shop he called at the Angle House a few minutes, but did not refer to what had taken place, yet I heard him say or swear to himself, as he came through the flower garden, "By my body and breeches, I would—the idiotic caco-demon." His object in calling was to ask me to wait upon him the next morning at ten o'clock at the Mansion.

While I went down the next morning, my mother made a call at the shop. The object was to re-consider their opinion respecting the letter from Messrs. Wells and Trueman, and the consultation resulted in writing to them, to the effect that there were reasons of the gravest character for not giving any information until it was known whether the

gentleman in Jamaica was, or was not, her brother.

This is mentioned, to show that Dame Wilson really meant what she said, when the Vicar took up her last words. No amount of gold could have shaken her determination on that point. It unavoidably came out in confidence to my mother—and, what is more singular, in confidence to Jessie likewise, that the name of Wilson was in both cases an alias. This did not much surprise my mother, but it did Jessie, and well it might. There was to her sufficient mystery about her birth, and her being brought to Timberton,—and of the latter event she was as oblivious as of the former—yet she knew upon the authority of her aunt that she was an illegitimate child, and her mother perished under strange circumstances. Beyond these facts she knew nothing. She did know, however, from what cause her aunt became a shopkeeper, and a considerable number of facts relative to the family of Rushworth.

The letter to Messrs Wells and Treeman was posted in due course, and the subject was for the most part dismissed from their minds or superseded by other things of a more tangible nature and pressing interest. Who the gentleman in Jamacia was, and what his object, will appear hereafter, but it is certain that Dame Wilson thought and believed her brother was dead.

I waited upon Captain Leo at the hour appointed. He received me with more than courtesy, for there was a deep touch of affectionate regard in his manner which very much affected me. He was in his breakfast room which was over a part of the portico of the front entrance to the Mansion, and though not large it had three windows in it looking south, east, and west, and they were made to open to the leaden roof where a number of evergreens in pots, or rather tubs, were placed, and two or three chairs. The parapet was about three feet high so that in the summer evenings it was a pleasant place to sit

and smoke or take tea, or take breakfast in the open air, at once overlooking the flower garden in front, and each side, the large lawn, and sheet of water at the farther side, the woods and most of the fine park which stretched towards Edgecombe.

The Captain's valet, as he showed me up to the room in question, said—"You are a particular friend of Captain Leo's, I find, Mr. Neville, for you are the only person about these here parts that I have ever shown the way up to his breakfast room, that's certain."

"So you infer the former from the latter," I observed laconically.

"Yes, sir, and a pretty correct way of coming to a correct conclusion; let me tell you, Mr. Neville, the Rev. William Rushworth has never been shown into his breakfast room, and no other man in Timberton. Mrs. Neville, and Dame Wilson and her niece have been shown into that room two or three times, but they are the only ladies—this way sir, if you please."

"Then I presume we must consider our-

selves so far"—I hesitated not knowing which words to use either favoured or honoured—when he added "amongst the number of his especial friends."

I found him busily engaged writing letters. After a hearty welcome of a moment he said hastily, "Look round at my curiosities a little while, or at the books, or pictures, or go on to the leads for ten minutes, I shall have finished my writing by that time." Without the slightest delay he sat down again and began scribbling with great speed, apparently as unconscious of my presence as of any inanimate object in the room. There were some very choice antique carvings in ivory of the cinque cento style, and a few of Indian and Chinese workmanship, very curious and very precious: there was a small glass case of fine antique seals and signets, a few of the latter of Babylonian or Chaldean origin, which were highly prized by the present owner: they were of an astronomical and astrological character, being emblems relating to the

Sabean mythology or the purer form of ancient faith Æther-Fire Theology. Standing on a small side table, richly inlaid with mother of pearl, there was a square ivory box covered with very finely executed carvings of geometrical figures, the lid was open and displayed the inside, which was lined with crimson silk velvet embroidered with gold, with a cushion of the same character at the bottom, which more than half filled the box. The object itself was rich and beautiful, but the most singular thing was this—a common book which did not seem worth a shilling, was lying on the cushion made to fit and hold the same as if it were an object as sacred as the tables of stone given to Moses on Mount Sinai. I gently opened the book without lifting it up and was a little surprised to find it nothing more or less than a copy of a common edition of John Wesley's Hymn-book. I must confess that I smiled to myself at the fancy of the Captain. I shut the book and was about to look at some

other object, but again opened the Methodist inspiration, this time at the fly-leaf where I saw the following written in a characteristic feminine hand.

"Jessie Dingle—married to midshipman Leo Elliott, May 12th, 1799, at the Church of St. Catherine's, Port Royal Jamaica."

I closed the book, and picked up an antique volume which had been well bound originally and richly gilt outside. I found it a Catholic missal with a considerable number of illuminations. The book had once belonged to the Bishop of Geneva, who lived in the time of Madame Guyon, the lady who taught the system of Quietism, about which there was a famous controversy between Bossuet and Fenelon, and it had been given to Madame Guyon by the Bishop, as a birthday present.

There was nothing particularly remarkable in this, and whether Captain Leo kept the missal because of the bit of history written on the inside of the lid, or because of the

illumination, I know not; but, as he saw it in my hand, he said—

"Ah, that's a curiosity in its way, I am rather fond of illuminated books of all sorts. Did you ever read any of her many works?"

I replied—"Never. I should like to look at some of them."

He rejoined, as he folded up his letters, "I rather like the lady, and indeed all men and women who lay claim to intercourse with Heaven in a down-right earnest manner. They are, for the most part, beyond doubt, sincere mortals, and there are not a super-abundance amongst us who dare be honest to themselves in matters of religion and theology. I will lend you the cream of her works in two volumes when I have time to look them out. They will be worth your notice, as you have decided to follow theology and religious teaching as a profession. There is no accounting for people's tastes. I would sooner command men from the quarter-deck of a

frigate midst red hot shot, then preach at them from a pulpit, as the fashion is at Timberton—would rather command a crew of pirates than a band of fanatics."

"And yet you say that you rather like those who lay claim to inspiration in earnest —are not such fanatics?"

"Ay, true, in the small sense—but I meant your founders of sects and forms of faith and phases of theology, such as George Fox, John Knox, John Calvin, Martin Luther, Ignatius Loyala—the inspired founder of the amiable society of Jesuits, who was, and is estimated by many as diabolus incarnate—and Michael Servetus inspired to preach the unity whom another inspired one was inspired to burn to death to the honour of the trinity —all of them being able to make their reasons and arguments 'refutation tight.' But you see, Harry, there is a vast difference between liking men in books as objects of study and commanding them in actual life. It would be easier to rule a crew of pirates,

and pleasanter to me than a band of hot-headed fanatics."

I replied, "Yes, I see that clearly; but then it shows that the founder of sects, such as those to which you refer, must have been great and able men."

The Captain rose from the table and his writing-desk, saying—

"No doubt able—to become all things to all men—and therefore great men in many things—evil if not good. Have you ever been on the leads here among my evergreens and birds? Just step this way; I call this my Quarter-deck. Is it nothing to live in a world like this, Harry Neville, where the glorious sun proclaims universal brotherhood of the whole human family? and yet that family is universally cut up into petty sects, all studiously engaged trying to circumscribe and fashion the Unchanging and Infinite to suit the form of their puerile conceptions and contracted speculations. It seems to me that true religion consists, not in opinions, but

in feelings—and the proof, the only proof thereof to another is in good actions. Hence all that is really divine is as universal as common humanity. I know this view is contrary in the main to the New Testament—to the Law and the Prophets—to the Koran—to the Zendavesta—to the Veds and Vedants—to the moral philosophy of Buddha and Confucius; but there is nothing against my conception; for this feeling—this inward life emotion of which I speak as the divine essence of the true thing is common to the whole, and belongs to every section and individual of the great family of the Almighty—

'Awake, my soul, and with the sun,
Thy daily stage of duty run,'" &c.

The Captain ended his unexpected remarks by singing the greater portion of the morning hymn standing bare headed beneath the everlasting sky and facing the sun. I was struck with the seraphic expression of his naturally stern features. When he had finished his

devotion, he began fumbling in his pockets to find what was not there, saying, partly to himself, and partly to me, or it might be to a green and red parrot in a cage close to him—

"I'll lay all the trees of Timberton to the yellow forelock of the man in the moon, I have left my cigar-case in the old summer house."

He stepped into his room and rang his bell, and as soon as he heard his valet coming up-stairs he called to him to fetch his cigars from the summer house. He returned to his Quarter-deck with a volume in his hand, saying:

"I just bring the memoirs of Sully by himself to show you the likeness of a man who was called wise in council and brave in the battle-field. His life may be concentrated into one small space, illustrating the general moral lunacy of man. He was a thoroughly zealous Calvinist, and very narrowly escaped that out-burst of Catholic christianity called

the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's, yet he strongly advised the King of Navarre to secure the crown of France by conformity to the Catholic religion, and the king took his advice and became after Henry IV. You see the likeness of Sully, a man renowned for wisdom and bravery—a man who believed Calvinism for the salvation of his soul as opposed to Catholicism, and narrowly escaped martydom by St. Bartholomew Massacre; yet who advised a fellow-immortal to conform to what his Calvinistic creed declared a soul-damning error, that he might secure the possession of a mortal crown for a season. Believe me, there are but few men truly honest to their creed and theology, and Maximilian De Bethune Sully was not one of them nor the King of Navarre."

Having examined the portrait I made some remarks about the general cast of countenance of all the thorough-going men of every well-defined sect, and asked his opinion whether he thought that fact was a result of

the creed, or whether it was the physiology of the men that determined them to adopt the creed. He replied:

"Everything rests upon its individual physiology. It is that which not only determines the development but comprehends it. Opinions have but little to do with men's conduct, although they are taught by all parties and sects as eagerly and bigotedly as if the whole character of individual man and society rested on them for virtuous existence. It is a grave error—almost a capital one in our civilization. Sully is a striking instance, and his conduct is not singular in this respect. His creed Calvinistic or his opinions—for creeds are only opinions—had nothing to do with his wisdom, which clearly saw that it would be wise in the king to conform to the Catholic creed, and he advised accordingly. His wisdom resulted from his physiology not from his opinions, for wisdom is not an opinion. Change the given conformity of the brain (taking that as a symbol of

the whole physiology) ever so little, either by adding to, or taking from, or modifying the matter of which it is formed, and the result will be different of inevitable necessity, not only in relation to the opinions but the wisdom and virtue. All the accredited teachings of all the state and self-constituted teachers of the world are substantially based upon another principle. But here come my cigars, and what are systems of philosophy and sectarian creeds and theological dogmata to the sensation produced by smoking a cigar. Thank you, Tom. Mr. Neville will take lunch with me this morning."

"Yes, Captain Leo," said Tom, as the former added, "if I may be allowed to say so—ay?"

I rejoined, "With pleasure, Captain Leo —for my physiology consents by way of instinct, and in some degree fashions my opinions of the propriety."

He continued—"In a great degree fashions them, for when it is not so in important affairs of life we are tortured with temptation

—out of harmony—dividing ourselves—and as Shakespere says: 'go to buffets.' In this life men mainly strive to make their opinions and interests harmonize, and both very frequently do violence to that which gives divine dignity to human existence.

In this fashion the captain talked and smoked, first walking to the west then to the east parapet, the south being fully blocked up with evergreens and bird cages: now and then turning from the gravest consideration of principles to chatter unmeaning nonsense to his birds, foreign and domestic; or to make strange comments about the clouds and wind, and the variations of the compass which he had in the middle of that quarter-deck connected with a sun-dial. He had made a vast number of observations on these subjects sufficient to fill a thick folio volume.

As soon as the sun-dial shadow pointed to the meridian he endeavoured to impress upon me the pleasure he should feel to smooth my way to a profession for life. He knew I had

declined the offers of Sir Langton, and why, much better than that gentleman. I had determined to go to Hackney almost immediately, certainly in less than a month. For this step I had especial personal reasons; but though I felt strongly inclined to follow my father's career, I had not decided, for I felt, as the Captain had been saying, out of harmony with myself. My inclination and opinion and interest were at loggerheads within me, nor did I feel able to explain myself to the kind friend on whose quarter-deck I was sitting. This did not spring from anything in him but from my own mind. No doubt I supposed several things as real in his mind which existed in mine alone in relation to Jessie Wilson and Mr. Willifer Elliott. However strangely they were formed in my mind, and however confusedly they were then jumbled together, I knew they had very great weight in determining me to a step which very much surprised the Captain. If I were to say

offended him I should perhaps not be correct, yet his manners looked like that state. It is certain that I displeased him when I assured him that I could not avail myself of his liberality and kindness touching his defraying the expense I should incur at Hackney.

He said—"Harry Neville, this is not wise in you; it is not kind even to deprive me of the pleasure I anticipated in helping you into a pathway where you can reflect honour on your relatives and friends, of which I supposed myself one, though you seem disposed not to allow me the privilege of one in a matter which, after all, has not the merit of the slightest sacrifice, and yet might in a manner make easy and pleasant what may otherwise be less so."

I acknowledged the force of his remarks; but still assured him that I could not, with my present state of thought and feeling, accede to his wishes.

He urged me to explain why I could not; but that was only increasing the difficulty. I could neither accept his offer, nor explain why I refused. I admit that it must have looked anything but pleasant to a man of his character, and this reflection added to my inward vexation.

He did not know that I passionately loved Jessie Wilson; but I knew that he had a strong desire that his son, the Ensign, should direct his thoughts toward her, which carried with it his approval of a matrimonial alliance; and in this condition I saw that it was possible for me to have a rival, and if that should develope itself, after I had accepted pecuniary aid from the father whose son should supplant me in the affections of one who I felt was all the world to me, my cup of bitterness would be too great to be endured. I seemed to have no misgivings about the future fidelity of Jessie, but I was sufficiently well acquainted with life and human nature to know that people often, as the Captain

had been showing, act in defiance of their better nature, and found repentance come too late.

Matrimony is perhaps the act in which women exhibit this error more frequently than in any other. It was quite possible for Jessie Wilson to love me, and me only; and yet, influenced by persons and things and relative considerations, marry another man, even though he had not in reversion the fee simple of such a mansion as that on whose entrance porch I was sitting.

It is no wonder that I felt uneasy about accepting that which might add gall to a bitterness which would be horrible to swallow.

I said to myself—I can endure privations of all sorts and degrees, though they pinch me to the backbone; but I cannot contemplate the possibility of that condition without agony, I will not voluntarily place myself in the circumstances which may force it upon my soul like an incubus. My means and my mother's means were but of the scantiest cha-

racter, and only just sufficient to keep us in the condition called respectable.

My mother had just enough, with economy, to keep herself after a certain fashion, and had, I knew justly, looked forward to a time when my efforts should add to our comforts. I was fully alive to this; but I knew she loved me too well—too wisely—to wish me to do violence to my better nature in a question like that at issue. It was, however, a comfort to me to feel that I was as devoted to her; and she had an assurance of my affections — a thing most consolatory to a mother's heart. She was well assured that the time would come, and in that belief she lived and acted.

I felt at that time that I had committed an error in informing Jessie of the last-mentioned tradition of the Angle House, respecting the "Blood spotted Ring finger." I felt sure that she considered her red-freckled finger, which is the ring finger, the one referred to in the tradition; and

though she at first considered that the matter might be understood in a good sense, still the human mind is subject to change in despite of itself, and any perception of its significance of evil might change her thoughts and feelings also as by magic.

I was at one time on the verge of informing the Captain that Jessie Wilson was engaged to me; but some insignificant thing put it aside. In this position of affairs, the Captain said, just as the bell told that luncheon was ready—

"Come, let us go below, and see what there is for our physiological development to feed on: for I fear this quarter-deck of mine has made you a little giddy, so that you cannot see things in their true light!"

I must confess that I felt a slight sense of chagrin to hear my conduct put in that light, so I replied—

"You are much mistaken, Captain Leo, for I have a head-piece steady enough to enable me to walk round this Mansion on the para-

pet coping stones, and look at the glory of the estate without dizziness. Believe me, I do not feel the least sea-sick."

He turned half round to look at me, and said—

"Well done, I am glad to hear you say so, for it confirms my opinion, that you would make a first-rate sailor. But come, let us go below; in a case of this sort the strength of your stomach will be the best proof of that of your head. The fresh air has given me an appetite."

END OF VOL. I.

T. C. Newby, 30, Welbeck Street, Cavendish Square, London.



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